

THE TINKER

A PLAY
IN THREE ACTS

By
FRED EASTMAN



BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

WARNING

Important

This play is protected by the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Empire (including the Dominion of Canada) and all countries of the Copyright Union. The printed text is offered for sale at the price quoted on the understanding that if additional copies are needed for a production, they will be purchased from the publisher. It must not be copied, in whole or in part, by hand or by any other process, under pain of the penalties provided by law; fine or imprisonment, or both.

In the event the play chosen is a royalty play, the royalty fee must be paid direct to the publisher before the date or dates of presentation.

It is dishonest and
illegal to copy parts.

BAKER'S PLAYS

BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS

Printed in the United States of America

THE TINKER

*A Play
In Three Acts*

By

FRED EASTMAN

*Author of "Courtship," "A Pageant of Worship,"
"The Doctor Decides," "Bread," "Our Lean
Years," "The Great Choice," "America on
Trial," etc.*



BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

"THE TINKER" is fully protected by copyright, and all rights are reserved. Permission to act, read publicly or to make any use of it must be obtained from WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY.

AMATEURS may use the play on the basis of a royalty fee of Fifteen Dollars (\$15.00) for each performance, payable to WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY, Boston, Mass., one week before the date when the play is given.

PROFESSIONAL rates quoted on application.

Whenever the play is produced, the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: Produced by special arrangement with the WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY of Boston, Mass.

COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY FRED EASTMAN

Made in U. S. A.

COPYRIGHT IN RENEWAL, 1958, BY FRED EASTMAN

FOREWORD

It may interest the readers of "The Tinker" to know how the play came into existence. Although it is a modern comedy, its inception grew out of a study of the life of St. Francis of Assisi. That study led me not only to read a number of biographies concerning him, but to go to Italy and spend several days at Assisi going over the very places where his spiritual struggles took place. Next I went to Oxford, England, and secluded myself for several weeks in a house along the Cherwell. There I wrote the play. I was not concerned in writing a historical play about St. Francis, but rather to capture the eternal verities and the spirit of that noble life and to put them in a modern setting. Such beauty of character as was his ought to be contagious and the lives which came in contact with it must respond to its influence. And yet, the Franciscan spirit could not win without a tremendous struggle against the devils of materialism and acquisitiveness. Any reality which this play possesses is the mirrored reflection of that struggle. Any beauty it may radiate is the beauty of the spirit of St. Francis.

THE CHARACTERS

DAVID WHITNEY.

JACK WHITNEY, *his son.*

ETHEL WHITNEY, *his wife.*

MARJORIE WHITNEY, *his daughter.*

JEREMY WHITNEY, *his brother.*

JANE SEYMOUR.

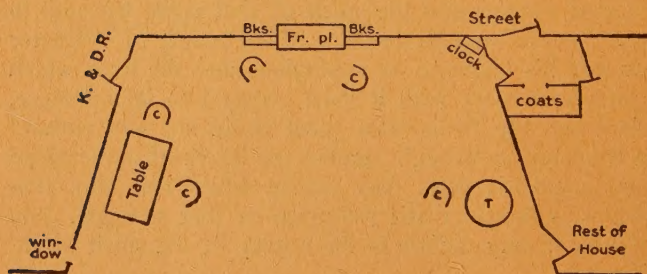
TINKER.

PLACE

*The Living Room of the Whitney home in southern
New England*

TIME

Winter.





THE TINKER

ACT ONE

(The rising curtain discloses the living room of the Whitney family in a small city of southern New England. In the center of the rear wall is a fireplace flanked on either side by bookshelves. Along the right wall is a table. Opposite this on the left is a smaller table with reading lamp and a telephone in a small cabinet. A Windsor rocking chair stands beside this table. In the corner Upper Left stands an old grandfather's clock, not going. There are small windows on either side of the fireplace over the bookshelves and a larger one Lower Right. Through the latter streams the light of a winter morning. The furnishings are all modest but in good taste and reminiscent of New England traditions. Before the fireplace is an easy chair and another in front of the bookshelves, Right. A door at Upper Right leads to

the kitchen; another at Upper Left opens upon the street; a third at Lower Left leads to the rest of the house. At the large table sits JACK WHITNEY, a lad of eighteen years, with strong, wiry body, heavy mop of hair, and attractive, kindly face. Both elbows are on the table and his fingers are pulling at his hair, for he is working on a problem in mathematics and thus far it has him stumped. The math book is propped up before him and a dozen sheets of paper are scattered about the table and on the floor. He squirms, crumples up the sheet he has been working on, and begins a fresh one, muttering his mental discomfort the while. After a half-minute of this struggle the door at Lower Left opens and his father, DAVID WHITNEY, enters quietly, the morning paper under his arm. He is about forty-five years of age, of medium stature, slightly stooped, iron gray hair, and conservative business dress. His face is honest, but a bit hard and slightly drawn in lines of anxiety. He smiles in gentle amusement at his son's battle with the figures and then goes to the easy chair in front of the fireplace, sits and unfolds his paper preparing to read.)

DAVID: Well, Jack, how goes the battle?

JACK: Rotten, thank you.

DAVID: I missed you at breakfast.

JACK: Been up since four o'clock working on this darned math.

DAVID: Why the sudden rush to get them all done to-day? Think Santa won't come to boys who are delinquent in math?

JACK: I can't go with the basket-ball team on their holi-

day tour if I don't have these problems in by noon to-day.

DAVID: Did the coach say so?

JACK: Naw! It was the math teacher. Gosh, Dad, that fellow has no school spirit at all. He ought to realize that I can't work out the problems of basket-ball and all these darned things at the same time. He doesn't think—that's what's the matter with him. And the hardest thing to bear is this: that blighter is going to wish me a Merry Christmas when I take these problems to him. (*contemptuously*) Merry Christmas! When he's just ruined me!

DAVID (*laughing*): Cheer up! Maybe he doesn't like to grade papers at Christmas time any better than you like to work them out. Anyway, give him credit for trying to help you.

JACK: Say, Dad, speaking of Merry Christmas, is there any chance of Santa Claus leaving a motor-cycle in my little stocking?

DAVID (*wincing a little*): I wish there might be a chance, but I don't see how, Jack. With Marjorie in college and the repairs on this old house getting more every year—

JACK: Oh, all right, all right. I can wait. But I do hope I get it before I have a long gray beard that will get tangled up in the motor.

DAVID (*laughing*): That would be inconvenient, wouldn't it? (*A pause in which David reads his paper and Jack broods.*)

JACK: Dad?

DAVID: Yes?

JACK: Why are we so poor?

DAVID: Oh, I know a lot of people poorer than we are.

JACK: And I know a lot of people who have more money, too. Most of the fellows in school seem to have more. They have motor-cycles and two or three of them have cars of their own. I don't see why we can't.

DAVID (*with a sigh*): I guess you will have to blame me. An assistant-cashier of a bank in a town this size doesn't get a very high salary.

JACK: But why stay in a town this size?

DAVID: I'm afraid I'm a bit old to change now.

JACK: But when you were young, why didn't you?

DAVID: I did want to, Jack. I used to dream about it and what I wanted to be— (*He pauses with a sigh.*)

JACK: Go on. That sounds interesting.

DAVID: If I had got my share of father's estate I would have had enough to do something with my music. I wanted to be a violinist, and my old professor used to encourage me to go abroad for further study. I wanted to the worst way and thought I could when your grandfather died. But he left a peculiar will—all his real estate to your Uncle Jeremy, and all his stocks to me.

JACK: I remember. And the stocks turned out worthless, didn't they?

DAVID: Yes.

JACK: And so did Uncle Jeremy.

DAVID: I'm afraid that's about it. Drink and the devil have almost done for him. He has drunk up three farms and now has only the old homestead left. What will become of him when that's gone, God only knows.

JACK: Why did grandfather make his will that way?

DAVID: (*rises and stands in front of fireplace.*) That's the part I hate to remember. Jeremy persuaded him to do it.

JACK: The rotter! I saw him staggering out of a speak-easy the other day so drunk he could hardly hold his head up. I wanted to kick him. I wish now I had.

DAVID: Why?

JACK: If you had got your share of that money I might have a motor-cycle now.

DAVID (*laughing*): That's a bit far-fetched. You see if I had got my share I would have gone off to Europe to study music, and in that case I might not have married your mother, and then there wouldn't have been any *you* at all or any Marjorie. On the whole, Jack, I'd rather have you and Marjorie than the music.

JACK: Bad judgment that. But it's too late to change. Was grandfather the only one of the family who ever had any money?

DAVID: So far as I know. Unless, perhaps, it is your grandfather's younger brother, my Uncle Toby.

JACK: Your Uncle Toby? What sort was he?

DAVID: He was a queer one, never amounted to much around here, but went west and made money in lumber. I haven't seen or even heard of him for thirty years. But this is no time for family genealogy. You need to get on with your problems, and I'll have to go to the bank in a few minutes.

(*DAVID returns to his paper and JACK to his struggle for a minute.*)

JACK (*after wiggling and pulling his hair without effect on the problem*): You haven't time to lend a hand

with one of these darned things, have you, Dad, this last one?

DAVID: Sure! School problems are easy compared with business problems.

JACK: Yeah? Well, whet up the old brain with this.

DAVID (*putting down the paper and coming to look over JACK's shoulder*): Which one? Oh, that. (*reading from the page*) "Find the side of a square whose area is doubled if the dimensions are increased by nine feet and six feet respectively." (*He rubs his chin thoughtfully.*) Um—um.

JACK: "Um—um" isn't the right answer, I fear.

DAVID: Let me see. Suppose we try to picture the thing. Let this be the square. (*He indicates the center of living-room rug and proceeds slowly.*) Now how long are these sides to be if the area is to be doubled by increasing the length of this side by six feet and that side by—

A VOICE (*from the kitchen*): David, what time is it?

DAVID (*looking at the grandfather's clock and calling*): A quarter past eight—no! that thing isn't going. (*pulling out his watch*) By George! It's twenty minutes of nine (*to JACK*) I must get to the bank! (*He flees from the problem in evident relief and takes hat and coat from the closet.*)

JACK (*playfully*): Ah! Ah! Never saw you in such a hurry to get to the bank before!

DAVID: Oh, if I only had a few minutes. A bit rusty, that's all.

THE VOICE: Wait, David!

(*Enter ETHEL, followed by TINKER. ETHEL is an energetic woman of about 42 still comely but more*

impressive for her vigour and air of managing everybody. She wears a morning dress, apron, and a determined look. TINKER is a queer looking soul of about 63 with bright face, gray hair, twinkling eyes, and a nervous jerky little walk. His clothes are exceedingly simple—a blue shirt and a pair of corduroy trousers and heavy shoes, all worn, but clean. He carries a small satchel of tools. But it is his face that holds attention for it is alight from some inner happiness.)

ETHEL (*crisply*): There, Tinker, there is the clock. Begin on that. I'll bring the knives to be sharpened later.

TINKER (*cheerily and making no move to go to the clock*): Good morning, friends, and a merry Christmas to you!

DAVID and JACK: Same to you!

TINKER (*eagerly*): Did you see the sparkle of the frost on the grass this morning? And the ring around the moon last night? I think it will be a white Christmas yet—don't you? (*He looks hopefully from one to the other. JACK is only amused, DAVID sympathetic, but ETHEL answers.*)

ETHEL: Now never mind about the weather. Get right to work. (*Disappointed, TINKER turns to the clock and looks at it.*)

TINKER (*brightly*): What's the matter with it? (*The three look at each other.*)

JACK: The hands won't go round.

TINKER (*to the clock*): Ah? That's very naughty of you. The devil always finds work for idle hands to do.

ETHEL (*sharply*): See that *your* hands are not idle! No need to converse. Just fix the clock!

(TINKER looks hurt, but opens his satchel of tools and busies himself.)

ETHEL (*coming C. and speaking in a low voice to DAVID*): Do you suppose—? (*She taps her forehead.*)

DAVID: Oh, no! I think not, just a little odd.

ETHEL: He came around last night and said he wanted work and could repair clocks, sharpen knives, cover umbrellas—anything, and would ask only twenty-five cents an hour.

DAVID (*to TINKER*): You've repaired clocks before, have you?

TINKER (*brightly*): Oh, yes! I can mend anything from a tea-pot to a broken heart. It's great fun. Why yesterday—

ETHEL (*severely*): No matter about yesterday. Just do your work to-day. And remember, it's twenty-five cents an hour, not a cent more. (TINKER looks hurt, but turns back to his work.)

DAVID: Well, I'll be going.

ETHEL: David, don't you go off without leaving me some more money! (DAVID comes back, reaching for his bill-fold.)

JACK: Oh, yes, Dad! That reminds me. Marjorie's coming home to-day, you know, and I've got to have a Christmas present for her. Two bucks, please.

ETHEL (*with a tone of authority*): Jack, go and take your golf shoes out of the oven. I told you not to put them there again, didn't I? And you can work on the

dining room table until I've finished with your father.

JACK (*taking his book and going without grace*): Aw, a fellow can't have either money or peace in this house. (*Exit.*)

DAVID: Here's all I have, Ethel, but it isn't much. (*He hands the purse to her and she takes out all the bills.*) What happened to the house budget this month?

ETHEL: Christmas broke it all to smash, Dave. Every club took up a special offering for one thing or another. The Johnsons sent us a present I wasn't expecting and of course I had to run out and buy them one. (*counting the bills*) Five—six dollars—is that all?

DAVID: That's the last of the three hundred, the noble three hundred, old girl.

ETHEL: Can you borrow a little?

DAVID: I can, of course. But is it wise? We did it last year and it was June before we got it paid back. We resolved then that we would never—

ETHEL: I know. But we are up against a condition not a resolution.

DAVID (*with a sigh*): All right. How much will you need?

ETHEL: Well, there's five for the turkey if I get it at the Cash and Carry. It would cost us six if we bought at a credit grocery, and five for installment on the vacuum sweeper. That's due in three days. And two dollars for the cleaning woman. And one dollar for the church—maybe we can skip that this year—

JACK (*thrusting his head in at the door*) : And Dad ! We are all chipping in to buy a present for the coach. That will be a dollar more. (ETHEL *waves him back and he disappears.*)

ETHEL : And we will have to do some entertaining while Marjorie's home, of course. And oh, yes, we must pay this fellow.

DAVID : I'll borrow fifty.

ETHEL : Better make it sixty to be sure. We'll manage to cut down on something in January.

DAVID : Taxes come in January.

ETHEL : Well, then, we can save on groceries. We can live on beans and hash for a month. But we can't fail to do our duty about Christmas, can we ?

DAVID : No, no ! But sometimes I wonder—

ETHEL : No time to wonder this morning, dear. Now—

TINKER (*interrupting eagerly*) : "No time to wonder?" Oh, you can't mean that, I'm sure ! We must always have time to wonder. That's what time is for. We would lose so much joy if we—

ETHEL : Heavens ! Whoever heard of such a thing ! (*to TINKER icily*) I was speaking to my husband ! (*TINKER, squelched for the moment, returns to his work, and ETHEL continues to DAVID.*) Now, David, take your pencil and make a list of things to do. Get five more Christmas cards and see that they are *clean*. Stop at Gallagher's Book Store and select a children's book for Jennie Newcomb—something with lots of illustrations. And that reminds me—have you got the presents for your Sunday School class yet ?

DAVID : No, I—

ETHEL: Oh, Dave, you are so forgetful. While you are at Gallagher's you might as well get books for the class. "The Life of Livingstone" would be good. You can get that in the seventy-five cent edition now. Six boys in the class, aren't there? That would be four-fifty. You can have it charged.

DAVID: But surely they have different tastes and won't all like the same.

ETHEL: They won't read it no matter what you get, so it might as well be the same for all.

DAVID: Then why—

TINKER: David is quite right. If you give the boys anything let it be something that will really interest them. Now, I could make some puzzles out of wire—

ETHEL (*dumbfounded*): Well, I'll be blessed! Look here, Tinker, you keep to your own work and pay no attention to us.

TINKER: I was only trying to help, ma'am.

ETHEL: We don't need your help on this. You are here to help on the clock and the knives and such.

DAVID (*in a low tone to* ETHEL): But I believe there is something in what he says. A boy would rather have a good puzzle than—

ETHEL (*out of patience*): Oh, why will you argue? Here it's only 48 hours to Christmas and I have no end of things to do. You have had your chance to get something and you didn't do it. Now it's too late. Do as I say . . .

DAVID: All right, dear. Anything else?

ETHEL: I think not. You won't forget to meet Marjorie at the noon train?

DAVID (*putting on his coat*): Of course not. (*brightening*) Won't it be great to see her again?

ETHEL (*sweetly*): Yes, dear—and wouldn't it be great if we could all drive down to the train in a nice *new* motor. (*As a flash of pain crosses DAVID's face she adds.*) But never mind, dear, we'll manage it in time. We cleared off the mortgage on *this* house. didn't we. Next, the *new* house and then the new motor. I'm doing all I can to help—all the housework and everything—you know, don't you?

DAVID: Yes, yes, I know. But really I must be at the bank. Good-bye, dear.

ETHEL: Good-bye! (*She kisses him dutifully rather than affectionately and he is off. Then she turns to observe the room and surveys it as a general might.*)

TINKER (*brightly, as if he had never been squelched*): How happy you must be to have your family all around you—and all looking so well. I expect you thank God for them every day.

ETHEL (*frigidly*): Yes, of course. But kindly do your work and be done as soon as possible.

(*The telephone rings. ETHEL answers.*)

ETHEL (*at the telephone*): This is Mrs. Whitney. . . .

Oh, yes, Mr. Graham. . . . The same to you. . . .

Yes, I'm still hoping, but we have done nothing about it yet. . . . What! The Baxter house—that new one on the hill? . . . And only eleven thousand? . . . Oh, it's a darling house and that is a *bargain* price. . . . How much cash? . . . Two thousand? That's very reasonable. . . . Oh dear, I don't know what to do. I do want it dreadfully.

But I don't see how we can manage it right now. I must talk with David. You hold it for me for a few days will you, please? I just must have it. . . . Twenty-four hours only? Oh dear! Well, I'll let you know. Thank you so much. Good-bye.

(Enter JACK exultant from kitchen.)

JACK: Yea! I got 'em! Got every last one of the problems! Now I can go on the basket-ball tour! *(He waves his book aloft.)* Any prof that stands in my way is going to get smeared!

ETHEL *(tidying the room hurriedly)*: Did you get them all? That's fine, dear. Now you can help me.

JACK *(still excited and not heeding her last remark)*: Did Dad leave me that money?

ETHEL: He didn't have any. Hurry, dear, and clear your papers off this table. I must have it to do up Christmas presents.

JACK: Gee, what am I going to do? I don't mind passing up Marjorie's present, but I simply must have one for the coach.

ETHEL: Please, dear, I can't take on any more difficulties this morning. Marjorie will be here for lunch and I have all the rest of my presents to do and lunch to get in the meantime.

JACK *(insistent)*: But what can I do for my share toward the coach's present?

ETHEL *(going)*: I know! Your father has an extra pair of cuff links he never uses—give him those! *(Exit.)*

JACK: Darn! *(He starts to clear up the papers when he notices the bright face of the TINKER who beams at him.)* Hello, there, how you coming?

TINKER: Oh famously! This was a fine old clock in its

day. I can make it all right again. It needs a new spring and a balance wheel. Clocks are like humans that way.

JACK (*clearing up the papers*): How so?

TINKER: Don't we all need new springs and balance wheels sometimes?

JACK: Righto. I need a new spring bad enough.

TINKER: You? Why, you look so strong and full of life.

JACK: Yeah. But that doesn't get the coach his Christmas present. Money's the spring I need.

TINKER (*very eagerly, and leaving his work*): Oh, believe me, money is no spring at all. It stops more human clocks than it ever starts. I've lived to learn that.

JACK (*amused*): Tell that to the Sweeney family, not to the Whitneys. (*An idea strikes him.*) Say, you going to be around this neighborhood for a few days?

TINKER: Yes, I think so. Why? Can I do anything for you?

JACK: Could you lend me a dollar until the first of the month? (*a bit ashamed of himself*) I don't like to ask it, but I'm really in a pinch.

TINKER: Oh, that's all right. Here it is. (*takes a dollar in small silver from his pocket and gives it to JACK.*) And you needn't bother to return it.

JACK (*incredulously*): Not return it? Why, of course I will.

TINKER: No, no. Pass it on. I mean sometime you will find someone else in need. Pay it to him.

JACK: Is this a system? Say, you are all right, even if you aren't quite—quite—

TINKER: Oh, yes I am! Quite! I've lived a long while and I've found out some things about humans. The goodness in them lies a way underneath the money—not on top.

JACK: Listen, old timer: if the goodness of this family lies underneath all its money, it is still on top—do you get me?

TINKER (*his eyes twinkling with the joy of discovery*): Ah! You have humour! A blessed gift! Better than all the motor-cycles. No family is quite hopeless if it has one humorist! Humour is something like a balance wheel in clocks—

(*The speech dies on his tongue, for ETHEL re-enters bearing an armload of Christmas boxes and parcels, white and red tissue paper, fancy string, etc. She freezes TINKER with a look and he returns to his clock while she dumps the bundles upon the table which JACK has by this time cleared.*)

ETHEL: Come, Jack, you can help on this.

JACK: Aw, Mom, can't I take these problems right down to the prof's office? I've got to get them in, you know, or I'll—

ETHEL: You can take them down when you take some of these presents around.

JACK: Good grief! Do I have to play errand boy? This is vacation, Mom; I ought to have a rest!

ETHEL: Vacation? Christmas? It's the busiest time of the year.

TINKER (*looking up from his clock, brightly*): And the happiest!

(*ETHEL's back stiffens and her lips are compressed, but she contents herself with a withering look at*

TINKER *and a commanding gesture to JACK to seat himself at the table and begin wrapping.*)

JACK (*with a sigh of resignation*): All right. All right. Our young scholar and athlete now gets in trim by trimming the Christmas presents. (*Pulls chair around for ETHEL.*)

ETHEL: You wrap and tie and I'll address.

JACK (*wrapping the first parcel*): What's this one, and who's it for?

ETHEL (*looking up from writing a card*): That? That's a gavel for Mrs. Burke. She's president of our Century Literary Society. The worst president we ever had. She simply cannot conduct a meeting. We had to get her something and thought a gavel might be suggestive.

JACK: I see. Are you putting that on the card?

ETHEL: Don't be silly. I'm saying, "In loving remembrance of the striking figure you make at our meetings." That doesn't say we think she is efficient, does it? But it will make her feel good.

JACK: Well, it's better than a dose of poison, I guess. What's this one?

ETHEL: That's a lace collar for your Aunt Em. I used to wear it when your father and I were courting. People don't wear those things any more, but Aunt Em does and she will appreciate it. She hasn't changed her style since Queen Victoria died.

JACK: That's loyalty to the queen, all right. What's this one?

ETHEL: That's a phonograph record for Mrs. Simpson.

JACK: The wash woman?

ETHEL: Yes, she's just got a cheap machine and she can't have many records yet.

JACK: Is this one of your old ones?

ETHEL: It's the one of the Hawaiian Band—rather mournful thing, but it's double, you know; one piece on each side, and she will like it.

JACK: Stroke of genius, I'll say.

ETHEL: What?

JACK: To get rid of that old thing. How about this one?

ETHEL: That's a book for the minister.

JACK: Will it interest him?

ETHEL: Of course. It is entitled "The Imitation of Christ."

JACK: Ever read it?

ETHEL: No. But the title is religious and I'm sure it will be suitable. And besides he needs something that will pull him back to the Gospel. He's been talking entirely too much about modern things.

JACK: Gee, this is a heavy one. What's in it?

ETHEL: Be careful of that. It's a cut glass dish. For Cousin Julie.

JACK (*peeping into the box*): Oh, I see! I'm darned if it isn't the top of your old boudoir lamp!

ETHEL: Well, isn't it all right? The globe inverted makes a dish—see? Cousin Julie won't know the difference and the lamp part is no good any longer. We have to get her a present and we also have to economize, so—

JACK: You're a wonder. It doesn't look much like a dish, though.

ETHEL: It is individual—and it is genuine cut glass.

She couldn't buy a piece that large for five dollars. The poor thing hasn't had a dish in years that she didn't get at the five-and-ten.

JACK: Don't know but I've seen dishes at the five-and-ten that I'd rather have.

ETHEL: That's because you don't realize how much a woman likes expensive things—distinctive things. You don't know what a sacrifice it is for us to have to do without them. (*She sighs.*)

JACK: Here's another book. Who's this one for? "Christmas All Through the Year."

ETHEL: That's for Mrs. Bowsher. Her tongue goes all year around and she does say the most cutting things. I thought that if she read a little of that book every day it would make her more charitable.

JACK (*opening the book and glancing at the pages*): Seems to be a collection of sweet thoughts. Hello, what's this? (*A card has fallen out of the book and he picks it up and reads it.*) "From Louise to Ethel, Merry Christmas, 1924."

ETHEL: Good Gracious! What a narrow escape. Whatever would I have done had Mrs. Bowsher seen that card! Louise Baxter gave me that book years ago. I had forgotten all about it.

JACK: Most of the pages aren't cut, Mom.

ETHEL: I haven't time to read, dear. Please don't think harshly of me. It really isn't nice to give away presents from others, is it? But you know how I do have to economize.

JACK: Sure! If any one gave me a book like that I'd wish it off the first chance I got. But I *would* take the card out.

ETHEL: Yes! Yes! By all means. (*She takes the card and tears it up.*) Speaking of Louise Baxter. Mr. Graham the real estate man called up a while ago to say that the Baxter house is for sale. Only eleven thousand, and it cost thirteen thousand to build. Mr. Baxter's work has been transferred to Chicago and he has to leave January first and he wants to dispose of the place before he goes. It's just the house in this town I would most rather have! And if we don't speak for it in twenty-four hours some one else will get it.

JACK: Swell house, all right. But where are we going to get eleven thousand?

ETHEL: We don't have to have eleven. We only need two thousand in cash. The rest can go on mortgages.

JACK: Dad's got about all he can swing now, hasn't he?

ETHEL: Jack, do you know what I think? If your father would buy that house it would put new life into him.

JACK: How would a couple of mortgages put new life into a guy?

ETHEL: It's a matter of psychology. He's in a rut just now. If he got out of it and into a better house he would say to himself, "Just see what progress I'm making—from that old house to this new one," and that would increase his confidence in himself. He'd feel like a bigger man and he'd do bigger things.

JACK: Maybe you're right, Mom. Wonder if I could try that theory out by getting a motor-cycle.

ETHEL: Oh, Jack, don't be selfish. Let's think of father and how to help him.

JACK: As you say, Mom. By the way, what are you going to give Dad—in addition to the mortgages?

ETHEL: Now please, Jack, don't be nasty. You know I want to help your father. And you and Marjorie. You are my whole life. There's the package for father—that long box.

JACK (*looking into it*): A necktie and a pair of socks! Not bad, Mom, not bad. A good bit like the ones he has now—but not bad.

ETHEL: I should say not! He needs them both—and I got such a bargain. They were originally three dollars and I waited for the sale last August and got them for two.

JACK: And you've kept them all this time?

ETHEL: Yes dear. That's the sort of foresight you have to have if you are going to manage a family like this on \$3600 a year.

JACK (*after a moment's thought*): Do you know what I'd like to get him?

ETHEL: No, what?

JACK: I've just thought of it. Remember his old violin that he never plays any more? The one he keeps in his closet on the shelf? There isn't a string on it.

ETHEL: Well?

JACK: I think I'll get him a half a dozen violin strings. Something he said this morning made me realize how much he used to care for his music.

ETHEL: He used to. But I don't believe he cares any more, dear. I think I'd get him something useful.

TINKER (*who can't keep quiet any longer*): Oh, ma'am, may I suggest . . . ?

ETHEL (*coldly*): Well, what is it?

TINKER: Anyone who has once loved the violin, never ceases to love it. I know when I was young—

ETHEL: Very well, Jack. If you think it would make your father happy get him the strings. By all means let us make him happy—no matter what it costs.

JACK: What about Maggots? What are you getting for her?

ETHEL: A new dress. It's a beauty, too. I've done all the embroidery on it myself. But Jack, you simply *must not* call her Maggots. It annoys her and it isn't nice.

JACK: Then make her quit calling me Jackie—as though I was a three-year-old.

ETHEL: And dear, please don't quarrel with her this time. You are both too old for that. Let's make it a happy time for her. She will only have ten days' vacation with us.

JACK: That's all I have, but see how I have to spend it—wrapping up packages!

ETHEL: You may stop now, if you're tired.

JACK: Can I, Mom?

ETHEL: Yes. And there's only one thing more I want you to do.

JACK (*with exaggerated apprehension*): Something else?

ETHEL: The silverware needs cleaning, dear.

JACK (*in agony*): The silverware! I *hate* that job!

ETHEL: Do you want me to have to do it with all the other housework?

JACK: What's the use of cleaning it? It only gets dirty again.

ETHEL (*rising*): Come. I'll show you where it is, and I'll give you an apron.

JACK: An apron! Aw, Mom, have a heart! What if some one should see me in it! (*Exeunt.*)

(TINKER *looks after them and shakes his head wistfully. The postman's whistle is heard, the street door is opened and the morning mail thrown in. It lands at TINKER'S feet and he picks it up. Among a dozen post cards there are two letters, one of them in a long envelope. TINKER'S eye catches this and he evidently recognizes the letter head. Glancing around him to see that no one observes, he starts to put the long envelope in his pocket, hesitates, pulls it out, taps it meditatively against his finger tips and mutters.*)

TINKER (*shaking his head thoughtfully*): It won't do. It's the wrong way. (*He apparently reaches a decision now for he quickly folds up the long letter and puts it in his pocket. Then returns to his work.*)
(*Re-enter* ETHEL.)

ETHEL (*to* TINKER): Did I hear the postman's whistle?

TINKER: Yes, ma'am. There's the mail—on the stand.

(*She takes it, glances hastily at the post cards, and then opens the letter. The contents electrify her. She goes quickly to the telephone.*)

ETHEL: Main 1231. . . . Right. (*to* TINKER) Tinker, will you please go into the kitchen and sharpen those knives while I'm telephoning here. (TINKER *goes.*) The First National? May I speak with Mr. Whitney, please? . . . Hello, David. Listen. A most important letter has come. It seems too good

to be true. I'll read it. It is from a lawyer in Seattle named Wheeler.

"Dear Mr. Whitney: Nearly a year ago, a client of mine, Tobias Whitney, an uncle of yours, I understand, came into my office and left with me his will. He said at the time that if he were alive at the end of the year he would be back again. But if he did not return I was to mail it to you in time to reach you just before Christmas. You and your brother Jeremy are the chief beneficiaries and he asked me to notify Jeremy that the will was being sent to you. I am sending to Jeremy a copy of this letter which will constitute his notice. And I am mailing your uncle's will to you this day.

"This is, of course, a most unusual procedure. But I need hardly tell you that your uncle was or is a most eccentric man. He told me that he had liquidated all his interests, which he valued at something over \$200,000, paid off his debts, disposed of his assets through his will, and was then ready to set out on a new way of life. He had some queer notion about living a life divorced from things—a life 'of the spirit' he called it. Of course, I did all in my power to dissuade him, but he was deaf to all my entreaties and insisted on going his own way. I have not seen him from that day to this, nor have I heard from him.

"You will understand, of course, that the will

must be duly probated in court after the death of your uncle is assured and it will then have to be proven that it is his last will and testament.

"Under the circumstances I can do nothing but follow his instructions, send you the envelope he left with me, and wish you a merry Christmas. Very truly yours, J. H. Wheeler."

What do you think of that, David? . . . The will? No, it wasn't on this mail. But it will probably be on the next. It looks like we're rich, doesn't it? . . . Oh, now don't be so conservative . . . of course it is sure. And David, more news! The Baxter house on the hill is going to be sold for a song in the next twenty-four hours. . . . Now don't hesitate! It's time for action! You'll come home? That's better. We'll make plans. Good-bye!

(*Enter MARJORIE WHITNEY and JANE SEYMOUR from the street. MARJORIE is vivacious, pretty, and a bit aggressive in manner. JANE is also pretty but less aggressive—outwardly at least. Both girls are about twenty-one years old, and dressed as college girls coming home for Christmas vacation would dress.*)

MARJORIE: Merry Christmas!

(*ETHEL rises to meet them.*)

ETHEL: Why, Marjorie! We weren't expecting you till the noon train.

(*She embraces and kisses MARJORIE.*)

MARJORIE: It's so thrilling to see you again. And you look so Santa Clausy with all your presents. Something there for me? And oh, yes, this is Jane Seymour, Mother.

ETHEL: Welcome! (*She shakes hands with JANE.*)

JANE: I'm just a poor tramp whom Marj is befriending, Mrs. Whitney.

MARJORIE: Jane's my roommate—from Seattle, you know. She was going to a house party but it was called off. So I made Jane come home with me. I want to show her what a real Christmas can be.

ETHEL: Delighted, Jane.

JANE: It's most kind of you.

(*Re-enter TINKER.*)

ETHEL: Let me help you with your coat. (*Crosses to JANE.*)

(*Enter JACK in apron. His eyes are intent on a large spoon in his hand.*)

JACK: This polish is no good, Mom. (*looking up*) Gosh! (*starts back hastily. MARJORIE grabs him. He tolerates her embrace and jerks off the apron, throwing it behind him toward the kitchen.*)

MARJORIE: And here's my little brother, Jane—and oh, Jackie, that reminds me. Our taxi is waiting outside. I spent my last change for breakfast on the Pullman. The meter read 85 cents. Give the man a dollar, will you?—that's a good boy.

(*JACK who has squirmed at the "little brother" and "Jackie" hesitates, reaches in his pocket, feels the money he has just had from TINKER, looks at the latter who beckons to him to "pass it on."*)

JACK: Sure—Maggots! Any little thing like that—(*He goes out, saying to TINKER as he passes*) Your theory is rotten, old man!

MARJORIE (*calling after him*): And bring the baggage upstairs, Jackie!

ETHEL (*to JANE*): You and Marjorie will not mind

being together, will you? We are so cramped in this little house.

JANE (*looking around*): It's a charming house, Mrs. Whitney, and so utterly different from our houses in the West. And what an obliging brother you have, Marj, why didn't you tell me more about him? I expected to see a little lad in short trousers from your description.

MARJORIE: I hardly knew him myself. I do hope he stays on his good behaviour. How's Dad, Mother? (*JANE turns to TINKER and watches him.*)

ETHEL: Just the same, dear. He doesn't change any. Same old job, same old routine day after day.

MARJORIE: I've got a surprise for him. And for you, dear. It's the loveliest idea. I can't wait to tell you.

ETHEL: What is it?

MARJORIE: I want to present you both next autumn with an educated daughter.

ETHEL: Yes, of course, that's what you're in school for, but—

MARJORIE: School is only half an education, Mother. It's travel that makes culture. And Jane and I are going to travel. To Europe—next summer.

ETHEL: Oh Gracious!

MARJORIE: It won't cost much, dear. We'll go tourist third. That's the way all the students are going these days. And you can make it my graduation present. See? We can have six weeks in Europe for only three hundred dollars. It says so in the folder. Isn't it lovely?

ETHEL (*trying to smile sweetly*): It would be a lovely trip. We must talk it over with your father. And

that reminds me: He'll be here soon. How did you get here ahead of time?

MARJORIE: Came on the solid Pullman. It costs more, but you save two hours and it's so nice. You take Jane up to my room, will you? I'll be there in a minute and then I'll run down to meet Dad.

ETHEL: Very well, dear. Come along, Jane.

(*As* **ETHEL** and **JANE** pass **TINKER** the latter beams upon **JANE**.)

TINKER: Good morning, young lady!

JANE: Oh, good morning!—Haven't I seen you before?

TINKER: I'm sure I don't know, but I'm glad to see you now. You young girls are like a breath of Spring-time.

JANE: I'm sure I've seen you before—

ETHEL (*firmly*): Come along, Jane. (*Exeunt.*)

(*Re-enter* **JACK** with baggage in both hands. **MARJORIE** runs to him, embraces and kisses him. Since it is only his sister he does not drop the bags but submits patiently to the caress, his arms, with the bags, hanging at his sides.)

JACK (*to* **TINKER**): Is this the way your idea works!

(**TINKER** nods happily.)

MARJORIE: What idea?

JACK: Never mind. Is this affection or do you think I've got another dollar?

MARJORIE: You were such a good sport to pay that taxi man.

JACK: You can thank him for that. It was his dollar.

MARJORIE: Whose?

JACK: The tinker's here. (*to* **TINKER**) This clinging vine is my sister.

TINKER (*brightly*): So I gather. How do you do, Miss?

MARJORIE (*disengaging herself from JACK*): How do you do? I'm sure I thank you for lending Jack the money.

TINKER: It was nothing, Miss. I would do a great deal more if it would make you happy. But you are happy, *aren't* you? So vivacious, and getting your pretty head filled with knowledge—

JACK: I'll bet there is some doubt about that on the part of the Faculty! (*He starts away with the bags.*)

MARJORIE: Jack! A word about Jane.

JACK: Well, what about her? I'm not going to eat her.

MARJORIE: I want you to be sweet to her—so she'll have a good time.

JACK (*the plaguing brother now*): Ain't I always sweet?

MARJORIE: No. You know how you embarrassed me before my friends in other years. Now be good this time, will you?

JACK: What's it worth to you if I do?

MARJORIE: Do I have to *bribe* you to be courteous?

JACK: You've guessed it. I'm desperate. Just got to have a Christmas present for the coach.

MARJORIE: Oh, darn you, how much?

JACK: I'll be decent for fifty cents, polite for a dollar, and I'll make love to her for two.

MARJORIE: A dollar is the limit. Out of my January allowance. A bargain?

JACK: Righto! And you pay all expenses.

MARJORIE: What expenses.

JACK: The necessary expenses of politeness—ice-cream, sodas, candy, and movies.

MARJORIE: You pirate!

JACK: Your allowance is three times mine.

MARJORIE: Have a heart! I can't do anything till I've seen Dad. I'm broke.

JACK: Sign on the dotted line or I drop these bags right here and walk out on you. (*He drops the bags and starts to walk out.*)

MARJORIE: All right, Captain Kidd. I'll pay the expenses. But all you'll get from me for Christmas will be one dirty look.

JACK: That's as much good to me as the Sunday School book you gave me last Christmas! (*They make faces at each other.*) And one thing more. You've got to lay off calling me Jackie!

MARJORIE: I will if you stop calling me Maggots.

JACK: It's a go—but Maggots suits you better.

MARJORIE: I'll get even with you yet. (*Exit L. L.*)

JACK (*to TINKER*): See, Tinker, that's *my* system. It's better than yours.

TINKER: Oh, no Jack, it's a very bad system. It gets you nothing but dirty looks, as you call them.

JACK: *And* money, which I don't have to pass on!

TINKER: But the passing on is the joy—don't you see?

JACK: Nope! It wasn't any joy to pass on that dollar to a taxi-driver. Your system is all wet. I'm right back where I started. But I haven't time to argue. (*picking up the bags*) Got to be nice to a girl. (*Exit.*)

(*Re-enter MARJORIE and JANE, the latter with a magazine.*)

MARJORIE: You can sit here and be comfortable while I run down and say hello to Dad. (*JANE sits.*)

JANE: I'll have a chance to finish this story.

MARJORIE: Will you do something for me, Jane?

JANE: Anything, Marj. What is it?

MARJORIE: You have a little brother, haven't you?

JANE: Yes.

MARJORIE: Does he always tease and embarrass you before company?

JANE: Always. That's the nature of the brutes.

MARJORIE: That's the nature of mine anyway. He's just done me a dirty trick and I want to make sure he doesn't do me another this trip.

JANE: Well?

MARJORIE: If he acts natural he will quarrel with me all the time I'm home.

JANE: Yes? They always do.

MARJORIE: But if he takes a liking to you—maybe he will change his tactics—see?

JANE: Almost. What do you want me to do?

MARJORIE: Just string him along. You know, nothing serious, but—

JANE: I get you.

MARJORIE: You can cut the string when you go back, but just for this week let him think that he's the cat's whiskers.

JANE: Sure. That won't be hard. He really looks better than most kids his age. Leave it to me.

MARJORIE: That's sweet of you. He'll be here any minute. I'll run along. Toodle—oo. (*Exit U. L.*)

TINKER (*talking to the clock*): You poor old thing, someone dropped you or banged you, didn't they, and it threw your balance wheel out of kilter, and you haven't run right since. Just like a human!

JANE: How funny! Talking to a clock!

TINKER: Oh, but the clock talks to me, too. Listen! I hear it now! (*He puts his ear to the clock.*) What's that? . . . Ah, yes! He says that a little girl banged him once and he hasn't been entirely right since. Isn't that a pity? Little girls should be careful of delicate machines like clocks and hearts, don't you think?

JANE (*laughing*): I think you are just too quaint for words!

(*Re-enter JACK, who crosses toward table R.*)

JACK (*to TINKER*): Mom wants you in the kitchen, Tinker. (*Exit TINKER.*)

JANE: Hello! Your mother tells me you're a basket-ball star. That's thrilling.

JACK (*pleased, but awkward*): Oh, it's not much.

JANE: Yes it is. You know what I think? The big men of to-morrow won't be the book worms. They'll be the men who know how to take care of themselves—strong and quick and determined.

JACK (*impressed by this girl's wisdom*): Well, basket-ball certainly makes you strong and quick, and if you're not determined you never get your mitts on the ball.

JANE: Oh, I wish I were a man. I'd love to play men's games.

JACK: Girls play basket-ball, don't they?

JANE: Yes, in a silly sort of way. But it's not the strong rough way that you boys have. That's what counts.

JACK: I've seen girls play—they are so sissy about it—like this: (*He gives a contemptuous imitation of effeminate procedure in his favorite game.*)

JANE (*clapping her hands and laughing*): That's it!

What a killing mimic you are! I wish some of our players could see that!

JACK: Now a boy goes at it this way. (*He dodges an imaginary opponent, passes, catches again, and shoots a basket.*)

JANE (*with a sigh*): What a difference! And do you go out for track, too?

JACK: Sure! Long distance, pole vault, and high jump. I nearly beat the school record last year in the long distance. I would have, if I hadn't stumbled and fallen within the last 200 yards.

JANE (*with great sympathy*): Oh, hard luck! But I'll bet you got up and finished the race anyway, didn't you?

JACK: Sure! But how did you know?

JANE: Oh, I can tell what stuff a man's made of. It shines through somehow.

JACK (*with determination*): And I'm going out for it next spring, too, and I'm going to win it or know the reason why!

JANE: 'Atta boy!

JACK: Say, would you like to see our athletic field, down by the school?

JANE: I'd love to!

JACK: Come on, let's go. I've got to go down anyway to see a prof. We can see the field and then have a little something at the soda fountain—what?

JANE: Oh, gorgeous! (*JANE rises.*)

JACK: Say, I'm glad you've come. Things were looking pretty dull around here for this Christmas.

JANE (*incredulous*): Dull? For a big boy like you? What's the matter with girls in this town?

JACK: Oh, they're all right, but they're lousy—that's all.

(*Exeunt. Enter TINKER from kitchen, followed by JEREMY, a dissipated-looking man of about forty-three. He is unshaven, nervous and his gaze is shifty. Not a vicious-looking fellow, but weak and unkempt. His clothes are good, but unpressed.*)

TINKER: Right this way, sir. I'll call her. Oh, she's coming. A gentleman to see you, ma'am.

ETHEL (*stiffening*): Well, Jeremy, what does this mean?

JEREMY (*smiling weakly*): Hello, Ethel! Just thought I'd drop around to see you and wish you a merry Christmas.

ETHEL (*harshly*): You did nothing of the sort. You haven't set foot in this door for fifteen years. That's been the one decent thing about you. You had enough shame not to show your face here.

TINKER: Oh, ma'am, please, please! I'm sure he has many good qualities. He was speaking very kindly with me. Whatever happened in the long ago—

ETHEL (*aquiver with rage*): Get to your mending and shut up, or else get out of this house!

TINKER (*going to his clock*): I'm so sorry, ma'am.

JEREMY: You've grown hard, Ethel, ain't you? You used to be so kind.

ETHEL: Why shouldn't I be hard? If it hadn't been for you we would have been living all these years in a good house, with plenty of money, instead of pinching pennies to get along and educate our children.

JEREMY: How d'you make that out?

ETHEL: You know very well it's true. You persuaded your father to leave you the property and to leave

David the stocks, and the stocks proved valueless.

JEREMY: How could I help that? I did it for the best.

ETHEL (*contemptuously*): For the best! Stuff and nonsense!

JEREMY: Oh, but I did! It was thisaway. I didn't know that the stocks was no good. All I knowed was that David had a hankerin' for music and wanted to go abroad to take lessons. Property ties a man down. I didn't have any reason for wantin' to go abroad, so I suggested that father give the property to me and the stocks to David. Was that so bad?

ETHEL: So that's the way you've salved your conscience!

JEREMY: That's the truth, Ethel. And did you ever think of this: if those stocks had been good David would ha' gone abroad and then maybe you wouldn't ha' had him at all? You ought to thank me instead of scold me. I saved him for you.

ETHEL: You saved him for me! You never saved anything for anybody! The only thing you've done is to squander your inheritance in every barroom in this town!

JEREMY (*wincing*): You have me there, Ethel. I ain't been much good to anybody, have I?

ETHEL: Not the least. And another thing: if your story is true, why didn't you divide up with David when you discovered that those stocks were worthless and you had all the property and he had none?

JEREMY: I did think of it, Ethel. But it's not so easy to give up money, once you have it, now is it? And David seemed to be gettin' on so well while I was only fooling. But even so I kept thinkin' that someday I would. And then I would just wait till I saw

that he needed it badly, was in trouble or sick or somethin' like that.

ETHEL: That's a likely story!

JEREMY: But the time never came. And all these years David has been buildin' up a home and a good name for hisself, and you've had him and your children. So haven't you had the best of it after all?

ETHEL: The best of it! You with three farms and the old homestead in town, and we with nothing but the sweat of our brows!

JEREMY: Yes, but the sweat has kept you clean, ain't it?

ETHEL: We thank *God*, not *you* for that! You haven't kept clean!

JEREMY (*wincing again*): No; I ain't kept clean!

ETHEL: You've disgraced yourself and David!

JEREMY: How have I disgraced him?

ETHEL: By dragging his name with you through the mud.

JEREMY: You're hard, Ethel! There's no mercy in you.

ETHEL: What mercy have you shown to us in these years?

JEREMY: Mercy to you? You didn't need any. You were strong. I was weak.

ETHEL: Oh, you make me sick with your sentimentality! Pitying yourself!

JEREMY (*straightening and looking her in the eye*): Maybe you're right in that, too. I think I should have been pityin' David.

ETHEL: What do you mean?

JEREMY: For livin' with you.

ETHEL (*pointing*): There's the door!

(JEREMY starts to leave—his head up and defiant

—but before he has taken three steps the defiance oozes out of him and he wilts and leans against the door jamb.)

JEREMY: Oh, what's the use? What the use? (TINKER looks at him sympathetically.)

ETHEL (half alarmed): What's the matter with you?

JEREMY: Everything's the matter. This isn't the way I thought it would turn out.

ETHEL: What would turn out?

JEREMY: You won't believe me, but I've been wantin' to come up here for years. I ain't got a friend left. I wanted somehow to begin all over again. I didn't have the nerve to go straight to David. I thought you might help—sort of smooth things over for me. I didn't know how to do it. And then this mornin' I got a letter from that lawyer in Seattle—about Uncle Toby's will—and I thought that would give me an excuse for talkin'—and now I've gone and botched it all up!

(He drops his head on his chest and the strength seems to have gone out of his body along with the defiance. TINKER pours a glass of water and takes it to him. He drinks a little while ETHEL watches, half relenting.)

ETHEL (in a softer voice): I'm sure I want to do what's right, but you came in here and insulted me. What did you expect?

JEREMY: I know! I'm sorry.

ETHEL: Now pull yourself together. The letter from the lawyer came, but the will didn't. No, it didn't—not yet. It will probably come this afternoon or

to-morrow. When it comes I'll telephone you and you can come over and read it.

JEREMY: I don't care so much about the will. Money's no good to me. It's David I want.

ETHEL: Oh, don't tell me you don't want the money. Not after all that happened in the past. Well, you'll get your share. *We're honest, we are.*

JEREMY: It's not the money I want, I tell you. It's David.

ETHEL: I have nothing more to say to you now, and I'll be obliged if you will go, for the family—and a guest—will be coming home any minute. I'll telephone you when the will comes.

JEREMY (*pulling himself together*): That's good of you. Good-bye! (*He shuffles out dejectedly by the kitchen door.*)

TINKER: Please, ma'am. Could I go with him? Just for a little way? He seems to be in distress. Maybe I could say something that would comfort him.

ETHEL (*abstractedly*): As you like. (*Exit TINKER.*)

(*ETHEL paces the floor a few times in perturbation. Then the telephone rings and she answers it.*)

ETHEL (*phoning*): This is Mrs. Whitney. . . . Oh, yes, Mr. Graham. . . . You can't hold that Baxter house? But I haven't had a chance to talk with David yet. He will be here in just a few minutes. . . . Mrs. Burke's made an offer? Well, she can't have it! How soon would you have to have the two thousand cash? . . . Let's see if I have that straight. We'd have to sign the agreement to purchase to-day and pay only fifty dollars earnest money now, is that right? . . . And then pay the

two thousand when we take title? How long would that be? . . . Any time within thirty days? That's fine! Very well, Mr. Graham, I will take the responsibility of telling you right now that we will take the house. David and I will be around this afternoon to sign the agreement to purchase. It's very good of you to give us the preference. Thank you.

(She hangs up the receiver and paces the floor excitedly as the street door opens and DAVID, MARJORIE, JANE, and JACK enter, all happy.)

ETHEL *(thrusting the letter into DAVID's hands)*: Here it is. Read it yourself. Isn't it wonderful?

(DAVID in center, with MARJORIE on his right and JACK on his left, each with an arm about his neck as they look over his shoulder, reads.)

JANE *(to ETHEL)*: Some family matter? I'll skip off to our room and unpack. *(Then in a low voice but loud enough for JACK to hear.)* I think your son is marvelous! *(JACK does hear and casts an admiring look at her—which she, of course, does not see. Exit.)*

DAVID *(concluding the reading, thoughtfully)*: Very interesting!

JACK: 'Ray for Uncle Toby!

MARJORIE: *Interesting?* Dad, it's *thrilling*!

ETHEL: After all these years of patient plodding—

MARJORIE: Let's dance! *(She grasps ETHEL's hand and JACK's and the three of them form a ring around DAVID and dance, while he stands smilingly in the center.)*

DAVID *(after a moment raising his hand for them to stop)*: That's very pretty—but it's premature.

JACK: Now, Dad, don't crab!

MARJORIE: *Count* your blessings, Dad, don't *doubt* them!

ETHEL: The children are right, David, it's the biggest thing that's ever happened to us.

DAVID: But that's just where the difficulty lies: it hasn't happened!

JACK: What hasn't happened?

DAVID: We haven't yet seen the will; we don't know that Uncle Toby has died, and we don't know that the will this lawyer is sending is the last one anyway.

ETHEL: Oh, David, have you been in a bank so long that you can't believe in anything?

DAVID: How do you mean, dear?

ETHEL: In God's goodness for one thing. Don't you see how this comes at the right time—we couldn't have thought this out for ourselves. It's too good—and yet it is just what we deserve.

DAVID: But it hasn't come yet!

ETHEL: Does God have to rub your nose in it before you can see it—haven't you any faith?

JACK: Do I have to go out and croak Uncle Toby and bring his head in on a platter?

MARJORIE: The lawyer wouldn't lie about it, would he?

DAVID: Let's sit down and think it over.

(He pulls the easy chair to the center and sits; MARJORIE sits on the right arm of it and JACK on the left. ETHEL sits on the chair by the table facing them.)

Now I've had experience with wills—

MARJORIE: I don't want to think. I want to dream! Next summer in Europe, Daddy,—maybe you and Mother

could come along—England—France—Italy—Switzerland. Old castles—cathedrals—shops—mountains—a gondola in Venice—the Pyrenees in Spain—quaint villages—ancient cities—sunny skies—can't you see them all, Daddy dear?

JACK: They're not worth looking at, Dad. Here's what I see: a motor-cycle right now—a red one that will do sixty miles an hour—next summer Lake George and a motor boat—and then next autumn College! Hot darn! Won't we have fun!

DAVID (*laughing*): Dream on! Dream on!

ETHEL: That's all very nice, children, but of course we will have to have the necessary things first. We shall be very conservative about luxuries and not waste anything. The first thing will be to have a decent house—one big enough to entertain your friends when they come to see us.

DAVID: Interesting news that about the Baxter house. I wish we were placed so we could take advantage of it.

ETHEL: We are, David! Right there in your hand is the assurance!

DAVID: Oh, dear no! This is no assurance. It is simply a possible hope that sometime in the future Uncle Toby may leave us some money.

ETHEL: David, there are times when I want to shake you! I'm not superstitious, but look what's happened this morning: first, an opportunity to purchase the very house we have most wanted, and at a ridiculously low price; second, a visit of a guest to remind us how inadequate this house is; and third, out of a clear sky this letter saying that at

least a hundred thousand is coming our way!
Doesn't that all look as though some Power were
trying to help us?

MARJORIE: *And it's Christmas!*

JACK: Who says there "ain't no Santa Claus"?

DAVID: It all looks that way, Ethel, but we mustn't
count our chickens before they're hatched.

ETHEL: Oh, you are so slow, David! So slow! No wonder
you just go along in that bank and never get
promoted!

DAVID: What do you mean, Ethel?

ETHEL: I don't like to say it before the children, but you
are in a rut, David. You just plod along. You never
show any ambition to get out of it! The men who
get somewhere are those who take a risk now and
then—for their families—and venture out.

DAVID (*humbly*): Maybe that's true. But what else
could I have done?

ETHEL: I'm not complaining about the past—but you
didn't want to buy this house until you had all the
money. We would have gone on living in a flat if I
hadn't insisted that you get a house and buy it on
mortgage. But we paid off the mortgage, didn't we?

DAVID: Yes. We paid it off, and the home is clear.

ETHEL: And now will it be the same way about the new
home—must I do all the pulling?

DAVID: But I don't have two thousand dollars.

ETHEL: You can get it easily enough—if you want to.

DAVID: How?

ETHEL: By putting a mortgage on this house. Then when
the money comes through from Uncle Toby you
can pay it off.

DAVID: And suppose the money doesn't come through from Uncle Toby?

ETHEL: Even if it shouldn't—the money wouldn't be lost, it would be in the Baxter house. It would be an *investment*.

JACK: Mom's right, I think, Dad. You've got to look on such things as an investment.

DAVID: It would be so much better to make the investment *after* we got the money—

ETHEL: You always talk like that. You want to wait to strike until you know you've got all the strength you need.

DAVID: Yes, I do.

ETHEL: But the time to strike is when the iron is hot.

DAVID: And you think that time is now?

ETHEL: I *know* it. Mr. Graham called up again just before you came in. He said he couldn't hold the house. Mrs. Burke was after it.

DAVID: What did you tell him?

ETHEL: I told him I would take the responsibility of saying that we wanted it and that you and I would come down this afternoon and sign the agreement to purchase. You can pay the two thousand any time in thirty days. We only have to have fifty dollars earnest money now.

JACK: Hooray! Good for you, Mom!

MARJORIE (*at the same time*): You had your nerve right with you.

(*They leave their Father and go over to ETHEL and pat her on the back.*)

DAVID (*gravely*): I think you should have waited for me, Ethel.

ETHEL (*the children around her*) : I wanted to. I tried to delay. But he couldn't wait. Mrs. Burke would have had it by this time. What else could I do?

DAVID : I suppose there's nothing for me to do but to back you up.

ETHEL : You wouldn't embarrass me before Mr. Graham, would you?

DAVID (*slowly*) : No—I couldn't do that. I guess we're in for the mortgage.

MARJORIE : But Dad! You're forgetting Uncle Toby's money—at least a hundred thousand!

JACK : Cheer up, Dad, or Santa will be sorry he gave it to you!

DAVID (*trying to cheer up*) : All right. I must be getting old. I'll try to look on the bright side.

ETHEL : That's it! Think of the new home, and how everyone will be congratulating you!

MARJORIE : And think of me budding out in new dresses in the spring—and maybe all of us among the Alps next summer!

JACK : And think of our young hero on his motor-cycle leaping from peak to peak!

DAVID (*laughing ruefully*) : Think of us all in the asylum when we wake up.

MARJORIE (*pulling him out of his chair*) : Come on, Dad, let's eat, drink and be—

ETHEL (*leaping up at the word "eat"*) : Eat! Heavens! What do I smell! Lunch has burned! (*She runs to the kitchen.*)

JACK : What do we care, we're going to have a hundred thousand! Pack up your troubles, Dad—

ETHEL (*returning*) : I'm so sorry! It's a ruin! I've been

so excited this morning. (*She is on the verge of tears.*)

DAVID (*comforting her*): Never mind, old dear. We will all go down town for lunch—if you still have that six dollars? (*She nods.*) Come on, for I must be back soon if we are to see Mr. Graham later.

(*They all hustle into coats, the children singing "Smile, Smile, Smile" and go out the street door. But JACK returns immediately and calls JANE.*)

JACK: Hey, Jane! Hurry up! We're all going down town for lunch!

(*JANE comes quickly down.*)

JANE: What fun! And what was all the singing for?

JACK: Oh, nothing! An old uncle just died and left us a quarter of a million or so—that's all.

JANE: What a nice old uncle! (*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter TINKER from the kitchen. He stands a moment looking at the dismantled clock. Then he pulls the long envelope from his pocket and looks at it.*)

TINKER: Some clocks have to be torn all to pieces before you can build them right again.

(*He loosens the flap of the envelope with a knife, opens it, takes out the will and tears it in pieces and puts the pieces in one pocket, the envelope carefully in another.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

(It is the afternoon of the following day. The room is unchanged except that someone has hung a stocking in the center of the mantel over the fireplace, and placed near it two cardboard arrows pointing toward it. On each arrow is printed in large black letters the legend, THIS WAY, UNCLE TOBY! The stocking is empty. Enter TINKER from the kitchen. As he walks toward the clock he sees the stocking and arrows and pauses to chuckle. Then he proceeds to the clock and begins to work upon it, talking to it the while in his gentle, wistful voice.)

TINKER: Almost finished, my dear. And when you are strong again and can move your hands over your face, will you remember me, I wonder? What's that? *(He puts his ear to the face and listens.)* You do remember already? How bright you are! And what do you remember? *(He listens again.)* Your first Christmas? Ah that was long ago and in another house! . . . Yes? Two little boys creeping down the stairs to see what was in their stockings? . . . Yes, yes, go on! And what was in them? . . . An orange? Yes, and what else? . . . A ball of pop-corn, that's right! And what else? . . . Think hard! . . . A book! For each of them? Be careful now! . . . The book was for the older boy—ah! And what was for Toby? . . . A what? . . . A mouth organ! You do remember, sure enough! . . . And were the little boys happy? . . . They

danced for joy! Yes, didn't they! . . . And what did you do? . . . You struck one and frightened them back to bed! . . . And Toby ran upstairs so fast he stumbled and almost broke his nose! He certainly did! I can almost feel it yet! (*He rubs his nose and chuckles.*) You've seen lots of Christmases since then. . . . Yes, yes, and so have I. And tell me. What do you think of Christmases nowadays? . . . What! Oh my! Where did you learn such language? (*He puts his hands over his ears for a moment.*) . . . You are wrong, though. They are not all like that. I've seen some very fine ones. You see I travel around. You've been keeping bad company. But we are going to change all that. . . . You'd like a change? Would you like to help? . . . Very well. Can you keep a secret? . . . Then here, take this letter—it's very important—and keep it until I call for it.

(*He takes from his pocket the long envelope and from another pocket some pages of manuscript, inserts them in the envelope and hides it in a recess on top of the clock*) There! You are going to see better days! Remember the old song we used to say together?

I and you, I and you,
One-tum, two-tum, three-tum, too.

(*He beats time to this, and the time is that of the ticking of a clock.*)

Yes, yes, we are going to see better days—we are going to *make* them better!

(*Enter* ETHEL *by street door. She carries an arm load of packages.*)

ETHEL: Mail come yet?

TINKER: Not yet, ma'am.

ETHEL: Let me know the minute it does. (*Exit L. L.*)

TINKER (*to the clock*): You're the mail man to-day, old timer. And pretty soon now—pretty soon—

(*Enter* MARJORIE and JANE *also carrying many packages.*)

MARJORIE: Mail come yet?

TINKER: No, Miss.

MARJORIE (*to* JANE): Let's look at it right now—I can't wait.

ETHEL (*calling from off-stage*): Is that the mail?

MARJORIE: No, Mother. It's just me—and Jane.

ETHEL: All right. I'm going to take my shoes off and lie down a bit. Will you answer the door and telephone?

MARJORIE: Sure. (*to* JANE) We can look at it right here if she's going to lie down a while.

JANE: It's a perfect darling, Marj. There won't be a better one on the campus.

MARJORIE: I'm so excited I can't untie the string. (*to* TINKER) Will you cut this for me, please?

TINKER (*coming forward with knife and cutting the string*): Certainly, Miss.

(*MARJORIE takes out a fine fur coat, puts it on and pirouettes. JANE and TINKER admire.*)

JANE: It will make all the coon-skin coats turn green with envy.

TINKER (*puzzled*): It is beautiful, Miss,—is it—is it—a Christmas present?

MARJORIE: I'll say it is! From my Uncle Toby—although he may not know it yet.

TINKER (*alarmed*): Oh dear! Oh dear!

MARJORIE: What's the matter?

TINKER: Nothing! I am neglecting my work. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! (*And he returns to the clock.*)

JANE: Do you think your mother will be very angry?

MARJORIE: At first, she will. But I just couldn't help it, now could I? A two-hundred dollar coat marked down to one-twenty-five—and me in my last year in college, and Uncle Toby pouring all his money into our laps!

JANE: Of course you couldn't! I wonder that you didn't buy two of them. When are you going to tell her?

MARJORIE: Not before the will comes—make sure of that!

JANE: How can you keep her from finding out?

MARJORIE: Gee! I hadn't thought of that. She's bound to see it in our room. I know! You say it's yours!

JANE: Sure! Whatever would have become of you if I hadn't come along to do your dirty work?

MARJORIE: No telling. How you getting on with the other piece?

JANE: With Jack? Oh, splendid! He's really very nice.

MARJORIE: What makes you think so?

JANE: Well, he took us to the show last night, didn't he? And this morning, he asked me what kind of chocolates I liked best.

MARJORIE: Oh, he did, did he?

JANE: And he told me that the girls around here are lousy, and that you don't understand him.

MARJORIE: I don't, don't I?

JANE: And I'm *different*!

MARJORIE: Has he said he's lonely yet?

JANE: Not yet. Really it's a shame to string that boy—he's so sweet.

MARJORIE: Of course he is with you, Jane, who wouldn't be? And you're a good pal to manage him so well for us—but don't let him spend too much money, will you? He can't afford it.

JANE: Even with Uncle Toby dropping it into your laps? Oh well, as you say. (*Sits.*) Someone's always taking the joy out of life.

MARJORIE: He's coming! Let me get this out of the way! (*She makes a wild scramble, collects the coat and wrappings and disappears L. L. just as JACK enters from the street.*)

JACK: Mail come yet?

JANE: Not yet, Jack. Is this your clever work? (*Pointing to the stocking and arrows.*)

JACK: I didn't want him to think he wasn't welcome. What *you* been doing since lunch?

JANE: Oh, just down town with Marjorie for a bit of shopping.

JACK: I've been doing a bit myself. Here's part of it. (*Holds out a two pound package of chocolates.*)

JANE: You're a dear, Jack! One of the most thoughtful boys I ever s—

JACK: Forget it! Hope you like 'em. They're the best I could get in this old town.

JANE (*taking a piece out and putting it to his lips*): If they suit your taste I know they are good.

JACK (*chocolate in mouth*): And thash not all the shopping either.

JANE: What else? Do tell me. I'm so interested in everything you do.

JACK: Can you keep a secret?

JANE: I can't keep anything else.

JACK: Then listen! I'm going to have a motor-cycle!

TINKER (*involuntarily*): Oh dear! Oh dear!

JACK (*to TINKER*): What's the matter?

TINKER: I—I—I've just done something wrong.

JACK (*generously*): Oh, that's all right. We all do now and then.

JANE: A motor-cycle! Oh, that's topping! A new one?

JACK: Brand new. Red. The best on the market.

JANE: Where is it?

JACK: It isn't delivered yet. But I've picked it out and they're holding it for me. And just the moment Uncle Toby's will is read—

TINKER (*a sigh of relief*): Ah! That's better!

JACK (*after a glance at TINKER*): The moment Uncle Toby's will is read I'm going up and close the deal.

JANE: Will your father allow you?

JACK: He said only yesterday that he'd like to get me one for Christmas if he only had the money. Of course he won't have it as soon as the will comes—I know that—but that will guarantee that it's coming. Mother got the house she wanted and Maggots half-way persuaded Dad to let her have that trip to Europe, so you can bet your goloshes that our young hero is not going to be left out.

JANE: I like the way you go after things—it's so bold and determined.

JACK: That's me. I'm going to listen to the Amen—or whatever it is they put on the end of wills—and

then I'm going to slap Dad on the back and say, "Dad, you know what you said you'd like to do if you were able, don't you? Well, you're able—"

JANE: Then you'll be Cain and kill him!

JACK: I won't have to kill him. Dad always keeps his word. He's a peach, that way. And then I'll beat it down to the shop and climb on that motor-cycle, and whizz-bang! I'll be shooting past this place at sixty miles an hour!

JANE: Are you sure you know how to run one?

JACK: Of course! It's easy! I've ridden the other fellows' lots of times.

JANE: It's so wonderful to be a boy and know you can do such things!

TINKER (*crooning to the clock*): Now then a little oil and pretty soon *you* will be clipping off sixty minutes to the hour, my pretty, and then there will be some whizz-bang around here—eh? (*He goes to the kitchen.*)

JANE: Isn't he quaint? I keep thinking I've seen him somewhere. Wait! I know! It was last summer. I was with Father in one of his lumber camps. We were driving along the road through the forest when an old man stopped us. He said that two of the men had been hurt some time before and were laid up. He wanted Father to come and see them. Of course Father couldn't take the time, but he gave the old man two dollars and told him to see that the men got anything they wanted. For some reason the old man got angry and said that what the men needed was not money but friendship, and Father said that that was what preachers were paid for, and

one word led to another till Father told the old man to get out of camp, he was so impudent. The old man turned away saying that the judgment of God would fall upon the camp. And I'm practically certain that this is the same old man! Do you think it could be?

JACK (*with an air of one who knows*): Not likely. It's too big a country.

JANE: But he certainly looks like him. I have a hunch it is.

JACK: Let's don't talk about him. Let's talk about us. I have a hunch I've known you before. Maybe in some previous existence.

JANE: Isn't that a large place, too?

JACK: You're spoofing me. But I do feel that way about you. It seems I've known you always. You understand me so well. It's funny—here I've been going around feeling lonely—all my life I've felt lonely—

JANE (*most sympathetically*): I know—I know so well that feeling.

JACK: And I never even heard of you until—

JANE: Didn't Marj write about me?

JACK: Oh, I suppose so, to the folks maybe, but that wasn't anything to me; sisters are always writing some sort of guff that doesn't matter—

JANE: Don't I matter?

JACK: That wasn't what I mean. I mean they just gab on and on and on about a lot of rubbish—

JANE: Oh!

JACK (*struggling*): Gosh! That wasn't it, either. What I'm trying to say is that when I first met you yester-

day and we began to talk it seemed no trouble at all.

It was just like talking to my dog—

JANE: I hope it's a nice dog.

JACK (*sweating*): You bet! He's a pal.

JANE (*helping a bit now*): Oh, I see! You mean I seemed like a pal.

JACK (*relieved*): That's it.

JANE: Oh, I'd like to be a pal.

JACK: Would you? That's great!

JANE: If you think I could be worthy.

JACK: Oh there wouldn't be any trouble about you; it's me—

JANE: Then let's be pals, shall we?

JACK (*extending a hand*): Let's! You're all there, Jane. I won't be lonely any more now.

(*The telephone rings, JACK answers. Re-enter TINKER.*)

JACK: Hello. . . . Yes, this is Whitneys. . . . Tell her what? . . . When she bought a fur coat a little while ago she left her handbag and you found it? . . . Yea, I'll tell her. You bet I'll tell her! Thanks! Good-bye! (*Hangs up receiver.*) Say! did Mag-gots buy a—

(*Enter MARJORIE L. L.*)

MARJORIE: I can't find my handbag. Did I leave it down here?

JACK (*the young lover submerged by the outraged brother*): Say you! Miss Vanderguild. What have you been trying to put over? They just called up from the store and said that when you bought your fur coat you left your handbag there. Does Dad know you are getting a new fur coat?

JANE (*rising*): It looks like a long winter blizzard coming. Maybe I'd better get under the covers. Fight it out, children, and good luck to both of you. (*Exit.*)

MARJORIE: Now, be calm, Jack. Keep your temper. It's none of your business whether I get a coat or not.

JACK: Is that so? Where do I come in? Don't I get *any* of this money? Maybe you think I can have a new handkerchief.

MARJORIE: Not a bad idea. Would you use it?

JACK: So you think you're going to get a trip to Europe *and* a new fur coat before I get anything, do you?

MARJORIE: Why not? Haven't I waited three years longer than you?

JACK: Waited? You got three years head start, that's all. If you'd waited three years to be born I'd had some chance at a square deal in this family.

MARJORIE: That would make us twins, dearest.

JACK: One of us would have died in infancy.

MARJORIE: Listen, Jack, you're not going to be nasty about this coat, are you? You don't know how much I've wanted one, and it's my last year in col—

JACK: You don't want one half as much as I want a motor-cycle.

MARJORIE: You'll get it in time—

JACK: Not if you spend all the money first. No sir, I'm not going to stand for that fur coat if I can't have a motor-cycle at the same time.

MARJORIE: What are you going to do—be a tattle-tale?

JACK: No, I won't tattle. I know what I'll do. I'll go right down and get the motor-cycle now and then if Dad stands for your coat he'll stand for the machine.

MARJORIE: You'll make a lot of trouble, if—

JACK: No ifs about it. You either take that coat back or I'll get a machine right now.

MARJORIE: Jack, if you keep quiet about this, I'll give you a pair of goggles to wear when you get your machine.

JACK (*shaking his head firmly*): Nothing doing.

MARJORIE (*her anger rising*): I see! You think you can bargain with me—hold me up as you did for Jane's chocolates and the movies. Well, I'm on to that—and I'll not be held up again.

JACK (*adamant*): Will you take that coat back, or won't you?

MARJORIE (*trying a new tack*): What do you think Jane would say if she saw you act like this?

JACK: She would say she liked my determination. She has sense, *she* has. She understands—

MARJORIE (*scornfully*): She does, does she? Maybe I understand more than you think. How do you know she isn't just stringing you along to please me?

JACK (*horrified*): She wouldn't do a thing like that! By George! That makes me mad! I'll show you I'm not to be trifled with. I'll give you a little exhibition of boldness and determination— (*Starts to go.*)

MARJORIE (*repentant of her rashness*): Please, Jack, I didn't mean it. I—she—was just fooling.

JACK (*almost in angry tears*): You're all alike, you girls, a rotten lot, and I'm not going to be made a fool of. I'm going to get that machine now if Dad kills me for it! (*He is at the door.*)

TINKER (*coming forward anxiously*): Don't, Jack!

You'll be sorry. Please! You young people don't know what you are doing. It's the blind leading the blind and you will both fall into a pit!

JACK (*slamming out*): Mind your own business! (*Exit.*)

TINKER (*looking after him*): Poor boy! He's all angry and upset. The fire is burning him up inside. That's bad, very bad!

MARJORIE (*angrily*): Darn! Why couldn't you keep out of it? Now he's gone!

TINKER: I wanted to stop him, and I would have stopped you, too, Miss, if I could. You have both done a very foolish thing. You have spent money that you didn't know was yours—but you have done far worse. You have sinned—sinned against love—

MARJORIE (*piqued*): What's that to you?

TINKER (*hurt, but still trying to persuade*): I'd like to save you from regret later—and then, too, I've lived long enough to find the way to peace—

MARJORIE: Oh, go hire a hall!

(*She is about to exit L.L. when the postman's whistle is heard and she turns quickly as the mail is thrown in the street door. ETHEL at the sound of the whistle also rushes in and they both scramble to pick up the mail which consists of about a dozen envelopes containing Christmas cards and one long envelope.*

TINKER has gone back to his work.)

ETHEL (*excitedly*): Here it is! (*She tears open the long envelope nervously.*) A bill! It's only another bill! And this is the last delivery before Christmas. The day will be ruined!

MARJORIE: Don't make such a fuss over it, Mother. Read these Christmas cards and cheer up. (*She hands*

ETHEL *the cards. ETHEL takes them and begins tearing open their envelopes petulantly.*)

ETHEL: Christmas cards! When we expected a hundred thousand dollars or more! Isn't it trying!

MARJORIE: I suppose Dad will worry about it, too, won't he?

ETHEL: Yes. I do wish your father would have a little more gumption. When we went down to the agent's office yesterday to sign that agreement to purchase the Baxter house (*TINKER looks up alarmed, but says nothing*) I thought he was going to back out even then. I almost had to push the pen for him.

(The clock begins to strike and strikes 14 times rapidly while TINKER counts with one finger and smiles rather grimly. His other hand is concealed in the works.)

TINKER: Isn't it funny, ma'am? The clock struck fourteen when it was only a quarter to three. Almost human!

MARJORIE (*to ETHEL*): Do you suppose he meant to insinuate—

ETHEL: Pay no attention to him. I think he's crazy.

MARJORIE: Who sends us the cards?

ETHEL (*looking them over*): The Lathams, Bossingtons, Aunt Nellie—isn't that a hideous one?—the Posts, the Fergusons, now that is rather sweet, and thank goodness they didn't write on the card: we can use it next year. And here's one from Maude Warren. Gracious! Why will that woman keep pestering me with her attentions! I didn't vote for her for president of the Guild last year and I won't next. And here's one from the Stephens—and I forgot to send

them one. I'll use the Fergusons' card right there and have Jack deliver it with a spray of holly to-night. Next year, Marjorie, we will not be using cards from Gallaghers or the five and ten. We'll have a plate made of the new house, with snow all over it—you know—an engraving or etching or whatever they call it. We'll make all this sort of thing look sick.

MARJORIE: And next year I hope we can have some decent clothes. I'm so tired of that old winter coat of mine.

ETHEL: Yes, dear. I know. But it isn't as old as mine. And we mustn't be foolish and spend our money until we know just how much it is and when it will come. And even then we must budget it very carefully.

MARJORIE: But you spent money for the new house—

ETHEL: That was an investment, remember.

MARJORIE: Couldn't we *invest* in some new clothes?

ETHEL: Don't be silly, dear.

MARJORIE: You know what you just said about Father's lack of gumption—well, wouldn't we be having a little gumption if we got the clothes we need?

ETHEL: Certainly not! That would not be the right sort.

MARJORIE: I don't see why. You think it's the right sort only when it concerns something *you* want—

ETHEL (*sharply*): Marjorie! Is that the way to talk to your Mother after all the sacrifices I've made—

MARJORIE: Well, I've made sacrifices, too. You don't know what it means for a girl to wear the same cloth coat winter after winter when the other girls are going around in furs. It's the ones in furs that

get married, too. The girls in cloth coats only become school teachers and book agents. Is that what you want me to be?

ETHEL: I didn't have a fur coat and I got married.

MARJORIE: But that was ages ago! Times have changed.

A girl simply has to have furs these days. I never urged you before because I knew you couldn't afford it, but now—

ETHEL: I don't believe your father would consent. I'm sure he wouldn't.

MARJORIE: You can bring him around. You know you can, Mother. You're wonderful that way.

(The telephone rings.)

ETHEL: Let's talk no more of it just now. I'll think about it. You run along and play with Jane.

MARJORIE: You'll fix it for me—won't you, dear—you're just the best mother in the world.

(She embraces and kisses ETHEL who is now at the 'phone, and then runs off L. L. Meanwhile TINKER has apparently finished his work for now he starts the clock going, closes his bag of tools, and as ETHEL phones he quietly takes the envelope from the recess on the top of the clock and unobserved slips it into the stocking putting it far down so that no part of it shows above the top.)

ETHEL (*'phoning*): Yes . . . Yes, David . . . Yes, the mail came, but the will didn't. But don't worry. Just be patient. I was over to see the new house a little while ago. It's a dream. You're going to have the loveliest time next spring—you and Jack—grading the back of the lot and putting in a garden . . . what's that? . . . Oh, making a garden

will be lots more fun than golf. It's more instructive, too, and it will let you be home more. . . . Yes, I'll call you if it comes. Good-bye."

TINKER (*coming forward, an expression of determination in step and voice*) : I've finished, ma'am.

ETHEL : Very well. How many hours?

TINKER : About twelve hours in all, I think.

ETHEL (*counting on her fingers*) : Yes, that's right, and at twenty-five cents an hour it will be three dollars I'll get the money. (*She goes out to the kitchen.*)

TINKER (*looking after her*) : I *must* do it. But it will be hard—hard!

ETHEL (*returning*) : Here it is—three dollars.

TINKER (*a quiver in his voice*) : I can't accept it, ma'am.

ETHEL (*surprised*) : Why not—that's the rate you agreed to.

TINKER : The amount is correct. But the money—I couldn't feel right to take it.

ETHEL : Why not?

TINKER : I can't very well explain, ma'am. But you see I don't work like most men.

ETHEL : You do seem a bit queer.

TINKER : I'm just happier, that's all. I used to be like other men, always working for money. I made a lot, too; but I wasn't happy then.

ETHEL : What changed you?

TINKER : I read a book—the Life of St. Francis of Assisi. You know about him?

ETHEL : No.

TINKER : Well, he gave up his money and worked for friendship instead.

ETHEL : Did the birds feed him?

TINKER (*eagerly*): They would have if he had needed it. But he didn't. He had great adventures. So I thought I'd try it. It's been lots of fun.

ETHEL: But I don't understand. Don't you take any money for your work?

TINKER: Oh, yes. I have to eat, so of course I have to take money.

ETHEL: Then why not this money?

TINKER (*reluctantly*): I couldn't feel happy about it.

ETHEL: But why?

TINKER: I don't like to say, ma'am.

ETHEL: I insist.

TINKER: Well, ma'am. There's no friendship on it. That money is spoiled. It's gone sour.

ETHEL: Talk sense, will you?

TINKER (*painfully*): It's sick. It's got the money sickness.

ETHEL: The money sickness?

TINKER: Yes, the itch for more money to buy more *things*, and more and more. It gets *things*, but it kills people.

ETHEL: What *are* you talking about?

TINKER: I'm afraid it caught that spirit in this house, ma'am.

ETHEL (*angrily*): How dare you!

TINKER: The money sickness is here, ma'am. I've seen it. It's ruining you, and it's killing David.

ETHEL (*with determination*): Enough! You're an insane fanatic! Take your money and go! (*She thrusts it at him.*)

TINKER (*refusing it with a gesture*): I'm sorry. I can't take it. Not money with that disease.

ETHEL (*imperiously*): Then go without it and go quickly!

TINKER (*going and speaking more happily, now that this burden is off his chest*): May God cure you, ma'am. (*Exit.*)

ETHEL (*perturbed and pacing the floor*): Whoever heard of such a thing!

(*She goes to the 'phone and calls DAVID.*)

Is that you David? How soon can you come home?

It's time now, isn't it? . . . Yes, do come right away. Something's happened. . . . No, not the children. . . . No. It's that dreadful man, the Tinker, he just went crazy and frightened me. . . . Yes, right away. (*She hangs up the receiver.*)

(*The doorbell rings. She answers it. As she opens the street door she faces JEREMY.*)

JEREMY: Hello, Ethel—

ETHEL: I told you I would call you when the will came. It hasn't come.

JEREMY (*brightly*): Yes, it has!

ETHEL: I tell you it hasn't and there's no occasion for you to dispute me.

JEREMY: I just passed the tinker on the street out here and I asked him, and he said it was here.

ETHEL: You can't believe what he says. I ordered him out of the house.

JEREMY: All right, Ethel. He spoke as if he knew. He said he had seen it.

ETHEL: Indeed? And did he tell you what was in it?

JEREMY: I asked him, but he wasn't very definite.

ETHEL: Come in. I want to know exactly what he said.

(JEREMY enters a bit awkwardly, twisting his hat in his hands.)

JEREMY: Well, I was curious and pressed him for an answer, but as I say he wasn't definite.

ETHEL: Just what did he say?

JEREMY: He said he had given us everything.

ETHEL: He's crazy, I tell you. It couldn't be more than \$200,000. Anyway, how could he have known anything about it when we haven't seen it ourselves?

JEREMY: I can't say as to that. But he said it came this noon.

ETHEL: But there is no noon delivery. You know that. Mail only comes mornings and afternoons and I was here both times.

JEREMY: I'm only tellin' you what he said.

ETHEL: Do you suppose that lunatic could have received it and hidden it from us? It may have come by special delivery while I was over at the new house.

JEREMY: New house?

ETHEL: We're buying the Baxter house. What could have—

JEREMY: Oh! I see. That's a nice place. Then you haven't been so hard up after all?

ETHEL: That's our business. We haven't asked any help of you, have we?

JEREMY: I sometimes wish you had—

ETHEL: That's what's happened. The will came by special delivery. He received it—opened it—and then hid it! He could be put in jail for that!

JEREMY: 'Spect he could. But better find the will first.

ETHEL: If it's here, we'll find it. (*She begins to search*

excitedly and looks everywhere except in the stocking.)

(Enter DAVID, a bit out of breath. He does not observe JEREMY at first.)

DAVID: I came as fast as I could. What's happened?

ETHEL: The will is here—somewhere. That crazy tinker hid it. I'll tell you about him later.

JEREMY: Hello, David!

DAVID *(starting as he observes JEREMY and then controlling his emotion)*: Jeremy!—what brings you here?

JEREMY: I saw the tinker on the street. He said the will was in the house. Ethel thinks he hid it somewhere.

DAVID: It's been a long time since you were here.

JEREMY: I was here yesterday—didn't Ethel tell you?

DAVID: Why, no. Ethel—?

ETHEL: I forgot, David. But don't stop now. Find this will. Maybe he hid it in the kitchen. You look again here, David.

(She goes to the kitchen, but DAVID stands facing his brother. For a long moment neither speaks, then DAVID breaks the silence.)

DAVID: It was a will that caused all our trouble before.

JEREMY: I know. I want a new start, now, Dave.

DAVID: And so do I. Father's will didn't do either of us any good.

JEREMY: I was tryin' to explain to Ethel about that will, Dav—

DAVID: What good are explanations now! The money's almost gone! You cheated me out of what would have been my share!

JEREMY *(in a half-whine)*: I didn't mean to cheat—

DAVID: Didn't mean to? You got all Father's money, didn't you? You persuaded him to make the will that way, didn't you?

JEREMY (*bitterly*): Yes, I got it! And see what it's done for me! (*He extends his hands hopelessly a moment and then turns his head away in shame.*)

DAVID: I'm afraid it's no use appealing for sympathy now. Not after all my hard years since then.

JEREMY (*pulling himself together and facing DAVID*): So they've made you hard, too!

DAVID: Maybe they have. Anyway, I've had all I can bear.

JEREMY: You think you've borne more than I?

DAVID: You? What have you borne—except bootleg liquor?

JEREMY: Ethel talked the same way. You're both hard.

DAVID: What have you borne?

JEREMY: I've borne it to be a failure myself and see you a success.

DAVID (*bitterly*): Ha! A success—with three mortgages!

JEREMY: The mortgages don't matter.

DAVID (*sternly*): They do matter! If you had a wife and family to care for, or even a business, you'd know how much they matter.

JEREMY: I didn't mean that way. I mean everybody looks up to you. And they're always pointin' you out to me and tellin' me what a fine fellow *you* are. Every time I hear 'em talk like that I go and get drunk, and that makes me forget.

DAVID: I'm not responsible for what people say to you.

JEREMY: That don't make it any easier to bear! You might have given me a lift if you had wanted to.

DAVID: Given *you* a lift? But you had all the money—

JEREMY: Money! Money! Is that all you think of? Couldn't you see that money was the ruination of me? You could have helped me to get hold of myself if you had given me a word now and then. You treated me like I was a crook. If you had only been a little decent to me I would have helped you, too.

DAVID: What did you think I would do—beg for a little charity?

JEREMY: Not that! I can't make you understand! You're still thinking of money. Doesn't it ever occur to you that you lost something beside money?

DAVID: No, what?

JEREMY (*laughing bitterly*): Hah! But you're blind! You lost me, for one thing. Not much, eh? Maybe not, now, but we used to have pretty good times when we were boys, didn't we? Our old fishin' trips weren't so bad, were they? You thought enough of me once to save my life in the old swimmin' hole. I ain't forgot that. And at Christmas time when Uncle Toby used to come and see us and we all hung up our stockings—

DAVID: That was a long time ago. We've changed since then.

JEREMY: That's what I'm tryin' to say. I've lost a lot. All the joy's gone out of life for me. There's little left but whiskey. But you've lost, too. Somethin' besides me. And more'n money.

DAVID: What?

JEREMY: Your music.

(DAVID's backbone gives a little at this and he turns his head away.)

DAVID (in a low voice): Yes—that's gone. But what's that to you?

JEREMY: That's what I could have done for you, Dave, if you hadn't given me the cold shoulder all the time. Maybe you won't believe it more than Ethel did, but when I persuaded Father to make the will that way it was so as you could take the part of the property that wasn't nailed down, so to speak, and didn't need lookin' after, and could sell the stocks and go away and get your music.

DAVID (after a moment): I'm afraid that would be pretty hard to believe.

JEREMY: I could have proved it to you if you had only given me a chance. If you would have given me a hand against the drink—helped me keep away from it somehow or done somethin' to those damned bootleggers that are always houndin' me—I'd a been glad to turn the money over to you to do somethin' with your music. But you were too proud to speak to me. And I was too proud to speak to you, and so it went year after year, gettin' worse and worse, and me goin' down and you goin' up. Me gettin' soft and you gettin' hard.

DAVID: What's past is past. We couldn't undo those years—even if things were as you say.

JEREMY: I know we couldn't. And that's what I came up yesterday to see you about. We aren't too old to take a fresh start, are we?

DAVID: I hope not.

JEREMY: Well, here's my proposition. We're both going to get a lot of money from this will. . . .

DAVID: We can be sure of nothing until we see it and even then—

JEREMY: Oh, I know all those ifs and ands and buts. I know the money won't drop into our hands as soon as the will is read. But it'll be comin', see? Well, what I want to do is this. I want you to take my share and keep it. It's no good to me. If I have it I will only drink myself to death. You keep it. Use it for your music or anything you want. And in return you give me a lift, see?

DAVID: How can I give you a lift?

JEREMY (*looking about*): Maybe if I was in a good home even though the people were hard—I could keep away from the booze.

DAVID: When did you get this idea?

JEREMY: When I got the lawyer's letter. . . . Would you do it, Dave?

DAVID (*thinking a moment and then hardening*): You don't know what you are asking. People would say I had got hold of your money, and was cheating you out of it. Besides, Ethel wouldn't like it, maybe, and I've got the children to think of. After all this is a home, not a reformatory.

JEREMY (*wilting*): Then there's no hope left for me.

DAVID: If I can give you a lift any other way—

JEREMY (*flaring up in anger and despair*): What good is any other way? Do you think you can help me by givin' me tracts to read? Or preachin' at me? Friendship is the only thing that counts.

DAVID: I'll give you a square deal. That's more than you gave me.

(*Re-enter* ETHEL.)

ETHEL: It's not there. I've looked everywhere. Haven't you been looking? What can you be thinking of?

DAVID: Sorry. I'll look. (*He turns, scans the room carefully, looks twice at the stocking, then walks toward it, feels it.*) Something here. (*Draws out the long envelope.*) Looks legal.

ETHEL (*excited*): That's it! Read it! Read it!

(*Enter* MARJORIE and JANE—the latter in the fur coat.)

MARJORIE (*also excited*): Where's the tinker? Jane's got a mystery! She thinks she knows him!

JANE: Yes. But I don't want to tell you till I'm sure—where—

ETHEL: Not now, Jane, please. He's gone. He was crazy. I had to send him away. And we've just found—

JANE: You sent him away? Oh, that makes it bad. Which way did he go? I must find him!

ETHEL: We can't stop now, dear. We've just found Uncle Toby's will—

JANE: If he's the man I think he is you won't want to let him go. I'll run after him if you'll only tell me which way—

ETHEL: Can't you wait until we read—

JANE: You wouldn't want me to if he's—but I want to surprise you. Which way—

JEREMY: I saw him a little while ago, Miss, goin' down that way. (*Gesturing.*)

JANE: I'm going after him! (*She rushes out.*)

ETHEL (*puzzled*): That isn't the coat she wore when she came in—

MARJORIE (*pitying herself*): Oh, no. That's just one of her other coats—her fur one. All the girls have them, you know.

ETHEL: Hm! Now, David, the will!

MARJORIE: Yes! How much do we get?

(ETHEL and MARJORIE crowd him and look over his shoulder as he tears open the envelope.)

DAVID (*with suppressed excitement*): Sit down, all of you, and I will read it aloud.

(*They sit, all on the edges of their chairs. DAVID stands, his back to the mantel, and reads eagerly at first and then with growing wonder.*)

DAVID (*reading*): "I, Tobias Whitney, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, do make and publish this my last will and testament, in order as justly may be, to distribute my interest in the world among those who shall come after me. . . ."

ETHEL (*beaming*): Isn't that sweet—the old-fashioned wording?

MARJORIE: Get on to the money part, Dad.

DAVID (*reading*): "That part of my interest which is known in law as my *property* having been already disposed of to various worthy charities, I now proceed to devise and bequeath all else."

ETHEL: That's queer, David; what does it mean: "already disposed of" his property?

MARJORIE: I think it means his real estate. Get on to the money for us, Dad.

DAVID (*reading on*): "Item. I give to my nephew, David Whitney, and his wife Ethel, the happiness they

will receive when their children discover them as comrades rather than providers."

MARJORIE: Skip the persiflage, Dad.

DAVID: "Item. I give to my nephew David Whitney the music which he loved long since and lost awhile."

ETHEL (*alarm growing*): I don't understand. Is this the way wills begin?

DAVID (*his voice trembling*): "Item. I give to my nephew Jeremy Whitney the brother he once had, the companion of his childhood and youth, and I charge these brothers to bear with each other's infirmities, and to strengthen each other in courage, fortitude, and hope. So shall they recover the beauty of brotherhood."

JEREMY (*sobbing*): Oh! Oh! Oh!

DAVID: "Item. I give to my nephew David Whitney his wife Ethel as he knew her when the wedding bells were ringing in her heart, and I give to Ethel my nephew David as she knew him when he loved his music and rode into her heart like a minstrel of old."

ETHEL: David! David! What is this?

DAVID: "Item. I further devise to my grand nephew John Whitney, all boisterous, inspiring sport of rivalry, and I give to him and his fellows all merry songs and brave choruses to sing with lusty voices."

(DAVID lifts his eyes, but no one speaks now. ETHEL is staring, fear-stricken, at the document as though it possessed a fatal fascination. MARJORIE has slumped in her chair, her face troubled. JEREMY'S head is in his hands and his elbows rest upon his knees.)

DAVID: "Item. To my grand niece Marjorie I further give the lovely graces—the beauty of the dance, the vigour of happy games, the charm of conversation, and the sensitiveness of understanding that makes for sympathy and appreciation. To her I devise the freedom of the new world and with it as a heritage the memory of the good women whose works of patience and mercy made the old world comfortable and affectionate for the generation that is passing."

(A sob from MARJORIE as her head goes into her hands. The afternoon light begins to fade.)

DAVID: "Item. And to such relatives and friends as I have who are no longer children or youth, I leave memory and bequeath the poems of Shakespeare and Burns and other poets to the end that they may live the old days over again, freely, and fully, without tithe or diminution.

"Item. To my loved ones with snow crown I bequeath the happiness of old age, the love and gratitude of their children, until they fall asleep."

ETHEL *(huskily and fearfully)*: Go on, David, go on!

DAVID *(his head sinking to the mantel)*: That's all. Just the signature. *(All are silent for a moment. Then)*

ETHEL *(groaning)*: Oh, God!

DAVID: Down! I'm down!

MARJORIE: I've been a fool!

JEREMY: But it was kind of beautiful, wasn't it now?

(As they are grouped thus humble and subdued, JANE flings open the street door and enters fol-

lowed by TINKER who comes to the center and speaks quietly but hopefully.)

TINKER: I've come back to finish the mending. You were like a clock—before I could put you together I had to take you all apart.

(They look at him wonderingly, their understanding dawning slowly. And now JACK'S voice is heard. He has apparently come in the back way for his voice comes from the kitchen. It is the voice of one in dire distress and penitence.)

JACK (calling from off-stage): Mom! Oh, Mom!

(He opens the kitchen door and leans against the door jamb, a sorry spectacle, for his left arm is in a sling, there is a bandage about his forehead, and his clothes are torn and soiled. And as he contemplates his family and his family contemplates this latest burden, the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

(It is Christmas eve and about eight according to the grandfather clock in the corner. The scene is unchanged except that the lights are lit and there is a fire in the fireplace which softens the room. As the curtain rises MARJORIE with sighs stands by the table folding up the fur coat and putting it back in its original wrappings. JACK, his forehead bandaged and his arm in the sling, is contemplating ruefully the legend on the arrows that still point to the empty stocking. Despondently he pulls the arrows down and throws them upon the table.)

JACK: And that's that.

MARJORIE: Did you ever see such a Christmas celebration? Everyone was afraid to lift his eyes to look at anyone else.

JACK: And you'd thought all the presents were rotten eggs the way they opened them. That old sock *(shaking his fist at it)* had us all hoodooed.

MARJORIE: Your violin strings to Dad made a hit with him, though.

JACK: Getting those was the one sane thing I've done this vacation.

MARJORIE: Does your head hurt badly?

JACK: Not so much. It's the lack of brains that hurts.

MARJORIE: If you ever grow any more, Jack, and want to get rid of them I hope you won't try to knock them out against a telegraph post—it's so messy.

JACK: I won't. I'll blow them out.

MARJORIE: With a gun?

JACK: No. With a saxophone.

MARJORIE: Now was that nice when I was trying to be sympathetic?

JACK: I didn't recognize it. Try again.

MARJORIE: How fast were you going when you had the crash?

JACK: Only forty-eight. There must have been a loose stone on the curve or I could have passed that truck slick as a whistle.

MARJORIE: Was anything left of the machine at all?

JACK: Yes—the pieces. Don't know whether it's worth putting together.

MARJORIE: I'm so sorry. I know it was my fault.

JACK (*amazed*): Your fault? Are you sick or something?

MARJORIE: I made you do it. If I hadn't bought this coat, and then plagued you about Jane—

JACK: Yah! Don't mention that girl's name! My worst regret is that she wasn't riding on the pillion behind me. That was the part that hit the pole hardest.

MARJORIE: I don't blame you. But you see, I've ruined her vacation as well as ours. And really, she liked you—

JACK: Let's don't talk about her.

MARJORIE: I won't any more, but I'm afraid she will feel she's not welcome, now that we are in such a mess. I wish I hadn't treated you that way and made you buy—

(*She is near to weeping.*)

JACK: Say! You didn't make me do anything. I did it myself.

MARJORIE: I'm older and ought to know more.

JACK: You're older—that's all.

MARJORIE: All right, but let's don't fight.

JACK: Why not? It's the only fun we have left.

MARJORIE: I don't feel like it now.

JACK (*in an awkward attempt to be sympathetic*): It's too bad you have to send that coat back—is that what's the matter?

MARJORIE: I don't care a hang about the coat—not really. It's Dad and Mother—and Uncle Toby's will. You know where it spoke of discovering them as comrades?

JACK: I know. That's why I was grumping about having no brains. I've only got Dad in an awful fix. You can return the coat—but I can't do anything with that machine except hold a post-mortem.

MARJORIE: I never saw Mother so flattened.

JACK: Nor Dad. He doesn't say a thing.

MARJORIE: His silence 'most breaks my heart. I don't see what he can do. He can never swing all those mortgages. And if Mother has to give up that Baxter house after she's set her heart on it I don't know what will happen to her. She simply won't give up the hope that Uncle Toby will yet come across with some money.

JACK: Any chance of that?

MARJORIE: Can't tell. When Mother sets out to get something she usually gets it. But Uncle Toby acts as if he knows what he wants and in spite of his seeming so gentle I'll bet he won't give an inch once his mind is made up. So there you are.

(*Enter JANE, L. L.*)

JANE: Hello! How's Christmas?

JACK: Shot in the foot!

JANE: It's ghastly, isn't it—everything so still and solemn. You'd think someone was dead.

JACK: He is.

JANE: Who?

JACK: Santa Claus!

JANE: What a hard blow on the head you must have had!

MARJORIE: We were just talking of Uncle Toby. What do you suppose he meant when he said he'd have his celebration later?

JANE: I can't guess.

JACK: What's he going to celebrate anyway? No one's given him anything.

JANE: And when I brought him back—what did he mean by saying he had to take you all apart before he could put you together again?

JACK: I understand about the taking apart right enough. But putting this family together again will be a harder job than putting Humpty Dumpty back on the wall.

MARJORIE: I asked him about that. He said it would take a long time, but he would give us a sample of it quite soon. That doesn't sound altogether rational, do you think?

JACK: It would take more than a sample to fix me for basket-ball. I'm sunk.

JANE: It sounds to me as though he still had something up his sleeve. Do you suppose he's actually given away all his money?

MARJORIE: If he has, poor Mother will throw a fit. She's nearly done for.

JANE: Really, Marj, don't you think I had better go back to school, or to some other girl's house? Your mother's had quite a shock and everything—wouldn't it be easier? (MARJORIE *bursts into tears.*)

Why—what is it, Marj? Did I hurt you—

MARJORIE: Don't mind me. I'm just silly. Only, I've made such a botch of everything.

JANE: What have you done?

MARJORIE: It's what I haven't done. I haven't been fair to Mother, or to Dad, or to you and Jack.

JANE: Nobody's fair to one's family. It isn't done. But what else?

JACK: Honestly, you're lousy, Maggots.

MARJORIE: That will—it made me see what a miserable rotter I've been—just an expense, a little gold-digger on the folks. And you Jane,—I might as well make a clean breast of it,—I told Jack how you were just playing with him to please me. Then he got mad and went out and bought that motor-cycle! (She puts her head down upon her package and weeps.)

JANE: Gee! You've been quite loquacious, haven't you? I'll have to go now. (Louder weeping from MARJORIE.)

JACK: Dry up, Maggots; if you get that coat wet they won't take it back.

JANE (to JACK): I know what you must think of me.

JACK: Sure. You're a coquette. And I'm a fool. But I don't blame you—I guess; you were trying to help Maggots. So it was all in the family, so to speak. Anyway, it was kind o' nice while it lasted.

MARJORIE (*drying her tears*): Oh, Jack, if it affects you

that way I hope you'll hit a telegraph pole every day of your life.

JANE (*to JACK*): You *are* a sport—a real one. I admire you tremendously.

MARJORIE: I've a notion to kiss you.

JACK (*horrified*): If you do I'll slap you so hard I'll break my other wrist!

(*Enter UNCLE TOBY, although we shall continue to call him TINKER. To the inner brightness of his face there is added the expression of a definite purpose. As MARJORIE said, he seems to know what he wants and where and how it is to be found.*)

TINKER: Ah! The stocking still here—but empty. (*He takes it from the mantel and carries it about the rest of the act.*) But not for long. Let's fill it.

JACK: That's fine, Uncle Toby. You go first.

TINKER (*chuckling*): Aha! I did! I gave you games—but you chose a motor-cycle. Which was better?

JACK: You win. But what do you want us to put in there?

TINKER: In just half an hour I want to have a Christmas celebration—a better one. I'd like to make your father and mother happy. I want this stocking filled with the best you can give.

JACK: Sure! But what have I got to give? Nothing but a garage and a doctor's bill.

TINKER: How about you, Marjorie? Can you show him?

MARJORIE (*shrugging her shoulders*): I don't know what you mean, Uncle, I haven't a dollar.

TINKER (*a little discouraged*): Dear! Dear! Are you still thinking of money?

JACK: What else is there?

TINKER: There's comradeship, for one thing. Now think! Do you know any comrades? What do they do?

JACK: They play golf together—that's all I know; and maybe go fishing.

TINKER: Very good. Do you play golf?

JACK: Sure!

TINKER: And does your Father? Yes? Ever play together?

JACK: No. (*then with sudden animation*) I get you! I'll give him half a dozen games of golf! How's that! And a fishing trip next spring!

TINKER (*joyfully*): Write it down! Here's a pencil and a bit of paper. (*Fishes them from his pocket.*) There! Now make a promissory note out of it. "I promise to pay to David Whitney, etc." You know how it goes.

JACK (*writing*): On the level—do you suppose Dad would really care for this?

TINKER (*solemnly*): I think he would rather play with his son than with any other man on earth.

JACK: Funny! I never thought of that.

TINKER: And you, Marjorie. See how it's done?

MARJORIE: I'm beginning to. But I can't think, Uncle Toby. I'd like to do something with Mother, but she never plays golf or anything. She works all the time and I've never learned how to do anything about a house except wash dishes.

TINKER: There! Begin there! How long's it been since you helped her with the dishes?

MARJORIE: Don't make me confess. I'm ashamed. But I can begin to-night, can't I?

JANE: Guess again, Marj. I'm going to beat you to it.
(*She goes to kitchen.*)

TINKER: And about play—oughtn't she to have some?
What would she most like to do?

MARJORIE: I can't imagine.

TINKER: Think harder! Ever hear her talk of any fun she had had?

MARJORIE: N-no. Yes! I remember! Five years ago she went back to the little town where she was brought up and saw some of her old friends. I know! Next summer—instead of that trip to Europe I can drive her in the old car back to that place again. We can do it together!

TINKER: Write it down! Then think of something for your Father.

JACK: Here, this one's ready. (*Puts it in TINKER's stocking.*)

TINKER: Fine! Now do the same for your Mother, Jack.
(*ETHEL enters from the kitchen. She looks a bit pale and wan.*)

ETHEL: Oh, there you are, Uncle Toby! I want to talk with you. Children—do you mind? Could you do that writing or whatever it is in the kitchen? Jane's there.

JACK (*to MARJORIE as both go out*): Will you help me think of something else? (*Exeunt.*)

ETHEL: Where's David?

TINKER: I asked him to go and bring Jeremy back.

ETHEL: And where did Jeremy go?

TINKER: To the usual place, I fear.

ETHEL: To get drunk? I thought as much. That's the way he's met every crisis of the past ten years.

TINKER: Let's change that.

ETHEL: How?

TINKER: There's only one thing I know will do it.

ETHEL: What's that?

TINKER: The affection he has for David.

ETHEL: It hasn't changed his conduct in all the years until now.

TINKER: But he has been separated from David all these years.

ETHEL: If David wants to be friends with him now I have no objections.

TINKER: You can't help them simply by having no objections.

ETHEL: What do you mean?

TINKER: David can't help Jeremy much without you.

ETHEL: Why not?

TINKER: He will need to be near Jeremy a great deal to protect him from the bootlegger crowd until he is strong enough to stand alone.

ETHEL: How *can* he be? Jeremy lives down the street and David can't spend his evenings there, can he?

TINKER: No, but— (*He pauses and ETHEL comprehends.*)

ETHEL (*resenting the inference*): You mean Jeremy might come here? No!

TINKER (*quietly*): The decision is with you, Ethel. But remember: it may mean heaven or hell to Jeremy.

ETHEL (*warily*): What would happen if I said "yes"?

TINKER: I can't be sure. All I can say is that I think his only hope lies that way.

ETHEL: I'm going to be perfectly frank, Uncle Toby. Are you testing me?

TINKER (*puzzled*): Testing?

ETHEL: I mean if I give the right answer will you still give us the money?

TINKER (*sadly*): No!

ETHEL: Why? Because I offended you? I'm quite willing to apologize. That's what I came in for just now.

TINKER (*quickly*): Oh, no! There was no offence.

ETHEL: Then why? I don't think you realize what a way we are in. We made commitments on the strength of the lawyer's letter. Foolish of us, of course. And all my fault. David wouldn't have done it. But you know how it was; you were here; you heard.

TINKER: Yes, I was here. I heard. And that is why I changed my will. It isn't as you think at all. I'm not angry. Nor revengeful. No, no! I want to give you something *better* than money. When I first made my will I didn't know you, none of you. But when I came to understand I knew that money wouldn't help. Money wouldn't give David back his brother, would it? Or Jeremy his?

ETHEL (*tensely, but not angrily. Rather in the last effort to convince*): I'm not responsible for Jeremy. I am responsible for my own children. I want them to have a better chance than I had. I want them to have a better home—one they need never be ashamed to bring their friends into. I want them to have a college education, and the culture of travel, and to dress well enough to go among people anywhere. You can't know what these things mean to me, for you haven't a home and children. Houses and

clothes and education all take money. I'm not going to be put in the wrong because I've wanted money to buy them. We couldn't let them run around in rags and grow up in ignorance while we talked about love and butterflies, could we?

TINKER. Suppose you could give them the best house in town, and the finest clothes, and a diploma from the oldest college—would all that make them more unselfish, or more courageous? Would money make them appreciate the sun and the sky and the clouds any more? Or be better friends? Do rich children love their parents any better than poor? No, my dear. I saw that money was useless for the needs of this family and so I wrote to the lawyer yesterday that he should donate all the rest of mine to a certain hospital.

ETHEL (*despairing*): Then there's no hope!

TINKER: Hope has just begun.

ETHEL: Hope for what?

TINKER: Hope that you will turn your thoughts away from money for a little while and put them on your family's *happiness*.

ETHEL (*with ill-concealed emotion*): Happiness? Why, that's all I've wanted.

TINKER (*eagerly*): Yes! Yes! I'm sure of it! But were you succeeding?

ETHEL (*hardening*): I might have if you had left me alone. It will be all the harder now. (*She starts out L. L.*)

TINKER: Please! Don't go! I can show you—

ETHEL: I'm afraid you can't. I'm a practical person.

We can't get on with this family without money.
(*She goes.*)

TINKER (*looking after her*): I can't open her eyes—but they must be opened.

(*The kitchen door slowly opens and MARJORIE peeks in to see if the coast is clear. She then comes in happily.*)

MARJORIE: Here's some more stuffing for the stocking, Uncle Toby. (*She thrusts six or seven notes into it, and looks up into his face.*) It's been lots of fun. Will mother—?

TINKER: Nothing I could say changed her.

MARJORIE: I was afraid it would be like that.

TINKER: She thinks that all you children want from her is what can be bought with money. Is that so?

MARJORIE: I would have said so this morning—but in that top note you can see for yourself. You may read it if you like. (*She starts to the kitchen and at the door looks back.*) Jack said to tell you he hasn't had so much fun since the school teacher had the measles. (*Exit.*)

TINKER (*reading the note*): "Miss Marjorie Whitney requests the pleasure of the company of Mrs. David Whitney to-morrow afternoon in her room for tea. Some short stories will be read aloud." (TINKER looks at the door L. L. through which ETHEL had passed and speaks as he taps his fingers upon the note.) Coming! We're coming! We'll have you yet!
(*Enter JEREMY and DAVID. The former is sober, but listless. The strength has gone out of him. He drops into a chair and buries his face in his hands. DAVID contemplates him sadly and after a moment speaks.*)

DAVID: Pull yourself together, man.

JEREMY: What for?

DAVID: What for? Ask Uncle Toby, he knows more what-fors than I do. I'll find Ethel and see if we can't fix you up a cot here tonight. (*to TINKER*) Where is she—in the kitchen?

TINKER: No. She went out that way. (*Indicating the door L. L.*) The children are in the kitchen—doing the dishes. (*DAVID starts towards the door to find ETHEL but suddenly stops.*)

DAVID (*incredulous*): The children doing the dishes, did you say?

TINKER: Why not?

DAVID: There's something wrong in this house. (*Exit.*)

TINKER: Now, Jeremy, we must work fast.

JEREMY (*surprised*): What's that?

TINKER: I say we must work fast. In fifteen minutes I want our family re-union to begin.

JEREMY: I suppose you want me to get out, then.

TINKER: On the contrary I want you to show the family what you're made of.

JEREMY: I'm made of nothin' but a big thirst and they know that already.

TINKER (*taking him by the shoulders*): Look here! In my eyes! The biggest chance of your life is right here. If you fail there may be nothing I can do for you.

JEREMY (*showing more interest*): What chance?

TINKER: Of saving David.

JEREMY: What! Me? *Save* him? You *are* crazy!

TINKER: Listen! He's been hit hard, hasn't he?

JEREMY: So've I.

TINKER: Forget yourself. You're single. He's married. He has a lot of cares and troubles you and I don't know anything about. He's in a bad hole. Three mortgages. College expenses. That motor-cycle. Taxes and what not. He expected a lot of money and it isn't coming.

JEREMY: That's not my fault.

TINKER: No. But this is the second time it's happened. The first it was your fault. This time it's mine. I'm afraid it will break him. We must work together if we're going to pull him out.

JEREMY: I never pulled anybody out of nothing.

TINKER: But you could. You can now.

JEREMY: How?

TINKER: Give David a hand.

JEREMY: Me? I was goin' to give him the money I was to get from you, if he'd give me a home. But you didn't come through, and anyway he wouldn't do it.

TINKER: There's still the old homestead, isn't there?

JEREMY: But that's all I've got. When that's gone I'm done for.

TINKER: What are you doing with it now?

JEREMY: I'm drinkin' it up. (*defiantly*) And what of it?

TINKER (*summoning all his inner strength*): What of it? I can show you what of it. Here are two pictures. Look at them. The first is a picture of Jeremy Whitney five years from now when he has drunk up the last of the old homestead. He's ragged, unkempt, sickly. His eyes are bleared. He is consumed by thirst. He wanders from door to door begging. No one cares for him. No one gives. The morning is fair, but he does not see it. The birds sing, but he

does not hear them. There's nothing left for him but misery.

JEREMY (*writhing*): Don't! Don't! I know that picture! It ha'nts me nights!

TINKER: Then look at the other. Jeremy Whitney, five years from now, back on a visit to the old homestead which he has given to his brother. This Jeremy is clean, head up, clear-eyed. His hand does not shake; his step is firm. He's been out West with his Uncle Toby, getting a new start. He's lived out-doors and breathed mountain air. He's made friends. He's got a job. On the streets of the old home town he's met the men who used to shun him. They congratulate him. He's come through. And now in the old homestead his Brother David is planning a camping trip with him—

(*During this recital JEREMY'S imagination has kindled. His head has gradually lifted, his eyes have taken on a sparkle, and his mouth and chin are set firmer.*)

JEREMY: Oh! God! God! Can that be me?

TINKER: And David is thanking his brother Jeremy again for pulling him out of the hole. (*softly*) They are friends once more.

JEREMY: Friends! David happy again!

TINKER: Is it worth the sacrifice?

JEREMY (*quivering with the new hope*): Would you take me with you, Uncle Toby? Would you stand by me until I get on my feet?

TINKER: If you want me to. I've been a bit lonely myself. I'll be glad of your company.

JEREMY: Then give him everything! The homestead—the old furniture—Ethel will like it—everything! How do I do it?

TINKER: Just now write it in a little note and give it to me.

(*Enter DAVID, L. L.*)

DAVID (*holding the door open*): It's all fixed, Jeremy—a cot in the little sewing room at the end of the hall. You can see it from here. (JEREMY *goes—a new spring in his step.*)

JEREMY (*going*): I'll do it, Uncle Toby, right away. (*Exit.*)

DAVID (*wonderingly to Uncle Toby*): What's happened to him? You didn't give him anything to drink?

TINKER: Yes. Of the Fountain of Hope.

DAVID (*seating himself heavily on arm of chair.*) He's lucky then.

TINKER: Not so fortunate as you, David.

DAVID: How do you make that out?

TINKER: Poor fellow—he's single. He's lonely. He has no wife and children such as you have to cheer him. He has no friends even. No one cares whether he lives or dies. He's tormented by his thirst and all the devils that go with it.

DAVID: Maybe so. But I'm at the end of my rope, too.

TINKER: Maybe it's time to get a new rope.

DAVID: I know. But I don't see any new rope. I see only an abyss of poverty and struggle—and I'm tired.

TINKER: I see no abyss, but a friendly valley, and at the far end a mountain to climb when you are ready, and the sun shining on it.

DAVID: That's because you are walking alone. You have no family to look out for. And that reminds me—what did you mean, Uncle, when you said you could put this family together again? Was it just a religious notion?

TINKER: It was fact.

DAVID: How can it be done—by preaching?

TINKER: Not by preaching.

DAVID: Do you think you can work some miracle?

TINKER: Not by miracle.

DAVID: How then? (*growing more tense*) It's not a theory we're talking about. I've just found Ethel writing a note to the real estate agent telling him we can't go through with our contract to purchase the Baxter house. Over there (*pointing*) is Marjorie's fur coat to go back. And on the lawn is a pile of junk that was a motor-cycle a few hours ago. I can make up the money in time, and stand the loss (*rises*) but the humiliation, that's different. We all feel beaten.

TINKER: You were on the wrong road. You had to be turned away from it.

DAVID: But where is the new road? I've travelled the only road I knew.

TINKER: I can show it to you.

DAVID: Do you think that you can convert this family to liking poverty?

TINKER (*smiling*): I am afraid not.

DAVID: You couldn't. That sort of St. Francis' life isn't

practicable for a family in the twentieth century. My children are ambitious and I am proud of it. I would not change them if I could. If they weren't discontented with what they have, they would never strive for anything better.

TINKER: Yes, David, but you are all ambitious only for things. There is a road that leads to something higher than things—up where you can look down upon them.

DAVID (*wistfully*): Where is it?

TINKER (*softly*): You are not far from it now. I can help you find it. (*rising*) But first ease yourself. You are all tense and strained. Let go your cares for a moment. Rest. (DAVID *sighs, relaxes, and lets his head fall back on the top of his chair where the fire-light plays upon it.*) There, that's better. Now recall the Boy-you-used-to-be—the boy I knew playing around here thirty years ago. Remember the old swimming hole with the willow over it? And the swing in your father's yard under the walnut tree? The last time I saw you, David, before I came back yesterday, you were standing near that tree playing some lilting air on your violin while your brother Jeremy swung high and low with the music.

DAVID (*in a low voice*): I remember. It was that old piece, the Barcarole from "The Tales of Hoffman." I used to love the swinging rhythm of it.

TINKER: I came up the walk to see your father for the last time for I meant to run away. I was jealous of his success in those days. But I was more jealous of his sons. You were both fine boys—you and

Jeremy. And I saw then how much I had missed in living the sort of life I had. I watched you until you finished the air and then you put your violin in its case and the two of you raced down to the swimming hole. I hoped then that you two boys would never fall apart as your father and I had done, that you would go on swinging down through the years, together.

DAVID: But we didn't.

TINKER: There were reasons, I know, that separated you but no reason is big enough to keep brothers separated. At any rate, while your father and I were talking we heard a cry and ran down to the river. Jeremy had been taken with a cramp and was drowning. You had jumped in after him and pulled him out.

DAVID: He would have done as much for me.

TINKER: Just so. In the years since you've been separated you've been looking out for yourself and your own family, David.

DAVID: Yes, that's all.

TINKER: And Jeremy's been getting out beyond his depth. He's drowning again now. Ask the Boy-you-used-to-be what to do!

DAVID: I know! I know! I've known all the time, but I've been driven, driven!

TINKER: No matter about the past—he's drowning now.

DAVID (*sitting up quickly*): He shan't drown. I'll go after him! He's my brother! No one shall stop me! No one!

TINKER: Not the fur coat?

DAVID: Damn the fur coat!

TINKER: Nor the motor-cycle?

DAVID: Damn the motor-cycle!

TINKER: Nor the new house?

DAVID: Damn that too! Whatever could I have been thinking of to let such things stop me. (*rising*) I'll tell him now, now while I see it all in perspective. I'll be master in this house for once. I'll invite him to come here and live with me until he's on his feet. He wanted to yesterday; I turned him down. I must have been crazy. (*Going to the door L. L.*) Jeremy! Jeremy!

TINKER (*fairly bursting with joy*): There! There! That is the road! It's the road to your brother!

(*JEREMY appears in the doorway, L. L. the note in his hands. The brothers meet a little left of center, while TINKER stands on the right beaming his benediction upon them.*)

JEREMY: Yes, David, I'm going to do it.

DAVID: Going to do what?

JEREMY: Didn't Uncle Toby tell you? I ain't much good at writin' but there it is in black and white, and my John Hancock is at the bottom. So you can hold me to it if I think different when the thirst is on me.

(*He gives his note to DAVID.*)

DAVID: I don't know what you're talking about. Uncle's told me nothing. And I don't know what you've written, but I want to say something to you before I read it. You're coming here to live—Jeremy. I'm inviting you now. Just as soon as Marjorie goes back to school and we have a room, it's yours. By-gones are by-gones. We're going to begin to be brothers again.

JEREMY (*struggling with something in his throat*):
Read it—Dave—read it!

(DAVID glances through the note and crumples it in his hand as his emotions sweep over him and his right hand goes out to clutch JEREMY'S shoulder.)

DAVID: You're doing this for me—without my inviting you,—oh, Jeremy!

(*As they stand thus, looking into each other's eyes, for a moment, and each realizing what the other has done for him, VOICES are heard in the street, singing a Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem."* It swells, and holds as the carollers come directly opposite the house. During the singing the others—MARJORIE, JACK, JANE, and ETHEL—rush in and stand at the street door which they open while they listen to the music, their backs to DAVID and JEREMY. JEREMY, overcome by his emotions, sinks into the large chair by the fireplace, his head in his hands. DAVID goes to ETHEL, puts a hand on her shoulder and gently turns her around until she sees JEREMY. Then DAVID gestures toward him and shows her the crumpled note from him. She reads it in amazement, then slowly sinks into a chair opposite JEREMY, her face writhing. The next verse of the carol begins, and the carollers are evidently walking on for their voices begin to recede. TINKER, his eyes sparkling, comes forward with his stocking, takes the notes from it and puts them into ETHEL'S lap. She looks up wonderingly into his face. He smiles and nods reassuringly. She opens the notes one by one and reads them quickly. Gradually a change comes over her—slowly at first, and then

with increasing power. Her hardness melts; she brushes a tear from her eyes, and another. Her head sinks for a moment upon her breast and her shoulders shake with weeping. DAVID steals out of the room, L. L. leaving the door open behind him. The carol dies away. The young people stand silhouetted against the doorway, quiet. MARJORIE points to a star. ETHEL rises and goes to JEREMY and touches him upon the shoulder.)

ETHEL: Jeremy, I am the most broken hearted—and the happiest—woman in this town. (JEREMY looks up and smiles, but cannot speak.) Uncle Toby, these notes—are they your doing?

TINKER (*with a voice filled with exultation*): Just a bit of tinkering with the family clock!

(*Through the doorway L. L. come the notes of DAVID's violin, unsteadily at first and then with confidence, playing the Barcarole.*)

ETHEL (*understanding at last*): David! David!

CURTAIN





T4-APR-488

